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Tempest in literary perspective| Browning and Auden as avenues into Shakespeare's last romance

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THE TEMPEST IN LITERARY PERSPECTIVE: BROWNING AND AUDEN AS AVENUES INTO SHAKESPEARE'S LAST ROMANCE

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INTRODUCTION

Near the end of The Tempest, Miranda exclaims:

> How many goodly creatures are there here!
> How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
> That has such people in't![1]
>
> (V.1.182-184)

In a way, her comment suggests the tone of many critical approaches to Shakespeare's last romance. She has been overwhelmed by the grand appearance of the Neopolitan court; similarly, many critics are overwhelmed by a play full of magical occurrences and graced with some of Shakespeare's finest poetry. The Tempest is undeniably a strange, perhaps even a wondrous, play, but spirits like Ariel appear elsewhere in Shakespeare as do deposed rulers and savage men. Perhaps the world of a magician seeking and rejecting bloodless revenge becomes so intriguing that critics encounter some difficulty in maintaining their balance. At any rate, there are four popular critical approaches--interpretation as allegory, as autobiography, as a modified revenge play, and as a treatment of the conflict between the worlds of Art and Nature.[2]

Historically, the most widespread approach has been to read the play as allegory. A. D. Nuttall discusses the nineteenth century allegorical approach in an attempt to find a logical connection between

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[1]All quotations from The Tempest are from the Arden edition, ed. Frank Kermode (London, 1964).

[2]These categories are mine. For another catalogue of critical approaches see Kermode, Introduction to the Arden edition of The Tempest, pp. lxxxi-lxxxviii.

allegory and metaphysics.[3] In the twentieth century, Emma Brockway Wagner offers the critical premise that "if the objects are unreal in the sense of being not physical, the play is not narrative fiction, but an allegory," and proceeds to argue that Shakespeare was allegorizing the religious confusion of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.[4]

Unfortunately, topical or philosophical allegorical interpretations tend almost inevitably to reduce the play to a set of rigid one-to-one correspondences. Since Shakespeare uses allegory in his other plays only to support larger issues (the allegory of the bodily organs and the belly in Coriolanus is an apt example), it seems odd that he would resort completely to allegory in what is perhaps his last play. Hence, until the allegorical critics can explain such a remarkable change in Shakespeare, their approach is open to question.

The second, or autobiographical approach, argues the possibility that Shakespeare wrote the play as a farewell to the theater. Nearly every critic who approaches the play suspects that because this may be Shakespeare's final play, and because Prospero closely resembles an artist, Shakespeare has inserted autobiographical detail here and there.

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[3]A. D. Nuttall, Two Concepts of Allegory: A Study of Shakespeare's The Tempest and the Logic of Allegorical Expression (New York, 1967). Nuttall really approaches the play as an example of his own complicated notions about metaphysics, but his first chapter provides a good summary of allegorical interpretations as diverse as those of Heinrich Heine, Victor Hugo, John Ruskin, and Edward R. Russell. It is Russell who really overdoes; by suggesting that Prospero is "almost in the state of a Deity," Russell, at least according to Nuttall, anticipates decades of religious allegorizing about The Tempest.

[4]Emma Brockway Wagner, Shakespeare's The Tempest: An Allegorical Interpretation (Yellow Springs, Ohio, 1933), p. 128.

Thus, Francis Neilson writes that the play is a "distillation of the problems that harassed [Shakespeare] from his youth."[5] Neilson is fond of historical extrapolation, but critical hunches about Shakespeare's personal life lead to shaky interpretative inferences. And even if there are autobiographical overtones in the play, they cannot account for all of the play. Like the allegorical critics, the autobiographical critics move far away from the text.

A third group of critics see The Tempest as a modified revenge play. Noting that Prospero regains his dukedom without bloodshed, these critics argue that Shakespeare is working out themes of reconciliation and restoration.[6] Derek Traversi exemplifies this view by observing that tragedy rises out of anarchical situations prompted by selfishness, but because potential disaster is avoided in The Tempest, the play is a counterpoise to the tragic themes common to Shakespeare.[7] This view is not essentially incorrect, for the play does deal with Prospero's attempt to punish political intrigue and to restore himself as ruler of Milan. Yet, like the allegorical critics, the critics of The Tempest

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[5]Francis Neilson, Shakespeare and The Tempest (Rindge, New Hampshire, 1956), p. 99.

[6]Of all the critical approaches to the play, this is the most pervasive and perhaps the most justified. A hint of the diverse approaches to The Tempest that touch upon this theme may be found in Hardin Craig, "Magic in The Tempest," Philological Quarterly, XLVII (January, 1968), 8-15; Una Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama (London, 1965), p. 269; Marian Bodwell Smith, Dualities in Shakespeare (Toronto, 1966), p. 227; E. C. Pettet, Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition (London, 1970), pp. 161-199 passim; and Enid Wellsford, The Court Masque: A Study in the Relationship Between Poetry and the Revels (New York, 1962), p. 339.

[7]Derek Traversi, Shakespeare: The Last Phase (New York, 1955), pp. 193-272.

as a modified revenge play ignore more subtle possibilities.[8]

Frank Kermode provides the latest and, in some ways, the most impressive approach to the play. He argues that the play centers on the conflict between Art and Nature, a conflict that he analyzes in terms of his definition of romance:

> Romance could be defined as a mode of exhibiting the action of magical and moral laws in a version of human life so selective as to obscure, for the special purpose of concentrating attention on these laws, the fact that in reality their force is intermittent and only fitfully glimpsed.[9]

Kermode's definition implicitly supports his interpretation of the play, but to the degree that it suggests that moral laws operate without naturalistic impediment in The Tempest, his definition of romance narrows down the play's elusive content, for The Tempest is a play that deals with the realm of possibility, in a naturalistic and a romantic sense, within which moral action can occur. Thus, the play concerns Prospero's final understanding of his actions and their context. Prospero operates in confident awareness of his desire to punish his enemies. But this confidence is not all that interests Shakespeare. Partly through Caliban and Ariel and partly through Prospero's own growing awareness of his limitations as a man, Shakespeare interpolates various comments about Prospero's moral certainty, comments that qualify, but do not deny, Prospero's moral attitudes. The play is not so much, as

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[8]A corrective to the optimistic view that these critics tend to support may be found in Jan Kott, Shakespeare: Our Contemporary, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (New York, 1964). Kott argues that the play is a historical fable that becomes a "great Rennaissance tragedy of lost illusions."

[9]Kermode, Introduction to the Arden edition of The Tempest, p. liv.

Kermode suggests, a dramatic presentation of the conflict between Art and Nature as it is a poetic examination of the elusive and sometimes illusory world within which moral certainty operates.[10]

This thesis, then, is an attempt to interpret the play in terms of Shakespeare's presentation of the uncertain nature of Prospero's revenge, and begins with studies of two poems: Robert Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos; Or, Natural Theology in the Island," and W. H. Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest." These poems are topically obvious aids, but there are more important reasons for using them as critical avenues into The Tempest.

To examine Prospero's revenge, his relationships with Caliban and Ariel become crucial, for these relationships suggest that he does not clearly perceive the nature of his two servants. On the one hand, he fails to comprehend the complex nature of Caliban, especially Caliban's poetic sensibility and his nascent religious nature. Browning's Caliban is a "primitive" man, but even so it is possible to detect in him a strong intelligence. Shakespeare's Caliban possesses a mind as potentially sharp as Browning's Caliban. Moreover, through his sensuous nature, Browning's Caliban comes to a glimmering awareness of a deity like the Christian God of Love, thus suggesting, at least to Browning, that Caliban has a natural sensuousness that can lead to religious awareness. Generally, then, an analysis of Browning's Caliban involves a number of potential comparisons with Shakespeare's, comparisons that illuminate Prospero's limitations.

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[10]For another critique of Kermode's views see Neilson, pp. 101-107.

Auden's poem is a source of comparison as rich as Browning's. Auden's presentation of the minor characters in The Tempest reveals his insight into various issues of the play, such as Antonio's and Sebastian's wickedness, the problems confronting a prince, and the nature of love. But Auden's poem is most useful when dealing with the relationships between Prospero and his two servants, Caliban and Ariel. In fact, Auden's major concern with the limitations inherent to the human desire to order experience centers on his interpretation of these relationships. For Auden, Prospero's failure correctly to understand Ariel (in Auden, the spirit of imagination) leads to Prospero's bitter disillusionment, symbolized by the destruction of Caliban (in Auden, the representative of existential reality). Although he sometimes misreads the play, as his desire to give Caliban the most comprehensive view of the play suggests, Auden nonetheless rightly perceives that the play should somehow be understood in terms of Prospero's relationship to Caliban and Ariel, because they are the ultimate dimensions to the world Prospero tries to order.

Neither Browning nor Auden exhausts the possible critical avenues into The Tempest. But they do provide certain clear avenues into the play, avenues which illuminate some of the concerns of Shakespeare's final romance. Moreover, the analysis of The Tempest that follows in Chapter III is neither exhaustive nor definitive. Nor is it intended to be. It provides, however, a perspective on the play intended to demonstrate the uncertain quality of Prospero's revenge as well as to examine the religious conclusions to which he comes.

CHAPTER I

"Never speaks his mind save housed as now."

Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos; Or,
Natural Theology in the Island."

Browning once remarked that "Caliban upon Setebos; Or, Natural Theology in the Island"[11] was his most representative dramatic poem.[12] There seems little doubt that the poem is among the most important in the Browning canon, at least if critical interest is a measure of importance. Nearly every student of Browning observes that his poetry is strongly religious.[13] Accordingly, critics of "Caliban" generally begin by viewing the poem as a religious statement by a religious poet. But agreement ends here. Some critics read the poem as a satire on nineteenth century rationalistic theology; others, as a poetic commen-

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[11]Robert Browning, "Caliban upon Setebos; Or, Natural Theology in the Island," Poems of Robert Browning: His Own Selections, ed. Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke (New York, 1896), pp. 191-197; hereafter cited as "Caliban."

[12]Letter to Edmund Gosse, March 15, 1885, Letters of Robert Browning, ed. Thurman L. Hood (London, 1933), p. 235.

[13]For some of the more current treatments of this subject see Norton B. Crowell, The Convex Glass: The Mind of Robert Browning (Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1968), who argues that, for Browning, life's test was to choose with principle and to act with resolution. Thus, his religious views were based upon a continual progress towards Truth. See also Roma A. King, Jr., The Focusing Artifice: The Poetry of Robert Browning (Athens, Ohio, 1968), who suggests that Browning came increasingly to regard art as man's most significant activity and that through the imaginative structures of art man expresses a sense of "participating in meaning and value"; and W. David Shaw, The Dialectical Temper: The Rhetorical Art of Robert Browning (Ithaca, New York, 1968), who reads the monologues as the dialectical weapon of a comic philosopher who sought to entertain as well as religiously educate his readers.

tary on Darwin's theories; and a few as the religious musings of a "subhuman" character.

Because the sub-title of the poem is "Natural Theology in the Island," and because the quotation from the Fiftieth Psalm that introduces the poem indicates a marked difference between Caliban and his God, some critics argue that Browning was satirizing the rationalistic theology of such "higher critics" as D. F. Strauss, Bishop Joseph Butler, and Archdeacon William Paley.[14] These commentators observe that Browning characteristically asserts the value of intuition in religious experience, so that the absence of an intuitional approach to religion in "Caliban" suggests that Caliban could never properly know his God. Thus, Michael Timko observes:

> Caliban simply is representative of one who fails to approach God in the right way. He lacks the emotional response necessary for the direct, intuitional knowledge of the God of Love. He is, in short, a rationalist; he believes in natural theology.[15]

Another group of critics see in the arbitrary cruelty of Setebos a satirical statement about Calvinist theology.[16] Behind these critics is the implication that Browning satirizes Calvinistic predestination,

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[14]See William Clyde DeVane, A Browning Handbook (New York, 1935), pp. 264-266; Park Honan, Browning's Characters: A Study in Poetic Technique (New Haven, 1961), p. 137; William O. Raymond, The Infinite Moment and Other Essays in Robert Browning, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1965), pp. 19-51; and Michael Timko, "Browning upon Butler; Or, Natural Theology in the English Isle," Criticism, VII (Spring, 1965), 141-150.

[15]Timko, p. 142.

[16]See Laurence Perrine, "Browning's 'Caliban upon Setebos': A Reply," Victorian Poetry, II (Spring, 1964), 124-127; and C. R. Tracy, "Caliban upon Setebos," Studies in Philology, XXXV (1938), 487f. Tracy reviews and refutes a number of satirical views about the poem.

transforming the idea of an unapproachable and pre-ordaining God into Setebos, a brutal and completely arbitrary creator. Since "Caliban" appeared in 1864 in the collection Dramatis Personae and sufficiently after the publication of The Origin of Species in 1859, C. R. Tracy proposes that the poem tries to show that "religious faith can begin even far back in the evolutionary scale."[17] Tracy sees Theodore Parker as the influential figure behind the poem. Parker, a long-standing friend of the Browning's, suggested to Browning that, if Darwin was correct, then a primitive man would have a primitive god.[18] Barbara Melchiori recasts this position in a slightly different way:

> The question which the poem is debating is not, as has often been argued, as to whether Darwin's theory denies the existence of God. Browning asks instead: how did God evolve? And he answers the question by showing the thought processes by which a concept of God could, or would, come into being.[19]

Satire and evolutionary criticism as approaches to the poem have recently been discounted by commentators who place their main critical emphasis on Caliban's mind, seeking to find in its workings some clues to the meaning of Browning's poem. John Howard breaks the ground here by taking issue with critics who accept the satirical and evolutionary approaches to the poem and suggests that what Caliban learns reflects the dimensions of his mind.[20] In fact, this approach most clearly

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[17]Tracy, p. 489.

[18]Ibid., p. 494f.

[19]Barbara Melchiori, Browning's Poetry of Reticence (New York, 1968), p. 142.

[20]John Howard, "Caliban's Mind," Victorian Poetry, I (1963), 249-257. Barbara Melchiori, too, finally reads the poem as Caliban's attempt to understand his sexually jealous creator. Patricia M. Ball,

illuminates the features of the poem that best provide an avenue into The Tempest.

Browning clearly had Shakespeare's Caliban in mind. In a letter to Dr. F. J. Furnivall, he writes:

> Then, as to the divergence from Shakespeare's Caliban--is it so decided? There is no "forgetfulness of his love for music," since he makes a song and sings it; nor of his "visions of Heaven," for he speculates on what goes on there; nor of his resolve to "learn wisdom and such grace," seeing that he falls flat and loveth Setebos, and was a fool to gibe at a Power he had miscalculated. True, "he was a very different Being at the end of the play from what he was at its beginning"--but my Caliban indulges his fancies long before even that beginning.[21]

John Howard catalogues the features of the poem that echo The Tempest, noting in particular Caliban's sensuous imagery and his characteristic cruelty.[22] At the outset, though, it is unwise to rest the arguments relating "Caliban" and The Tempest solely on the derivative connections between them.

Of greater importance for an understanding of The Tempest is Browning's presentation of the complex dimensions of Caliban's nature. First of all, Caliban is sensuous. While this quality is by itself not deeply important, Caliban's ability to employ sense experience to arrive at intellectual positions is. In other words, at least as far as Browning sees, the intellection of "primitive" man originates in the "primitive" man's senses. Second, Caliban has an intellectual nature, a

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"Browning's Godot," Victorian Poetry, III (Autumn, 1965), 245-253, contemporizes dramatically by arguing that Caliban, as a representative of Browning's dramatic figures, typifies the frame of mind of Samuel Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon.

[21]Letter of April 25, 1884, Letters, ed. Hood, p. 228.

[22]Howard, p. 250f.

nature that Shakespeare's Prospero never fully realizes. Indeed, Browning's Caliban creates a number of complicated analogies in an attempt not only to elude Setebos, but also to define his own position in terms of his physical world, his own nature, and the religious nature of Setebos and the Quiet. Consequently, Browning's "Caliban" is useful in a third way, because the poem concerns itself with Browning's awareness that Caliban possesses a mind capable of dealing with religious issues. While Shakespeare's Caliban does not articulate the range of religious insight of Browning's Caliban, the two "primitives" are similar enough to suggest that, in The Tempest, Prospero may incorrectly assume his Caliban lacks an educable nature. If Shakespeare's Caliban would realize some religious truth, then he might realize the breach of morality in his attempted rape of Miranda, and if that possibility exists, then Prospero's insistence on an unyielding, even harsh, control of Caliban may be misguided. In broadest terms, Browning suggests that the "primitive" man may be neither unintelligent nor uneducable. Thus, Prospero's failure in The Tempest to understand fully his slave is one way in which Shakespeare suggests that Prospero's original conception of his revenge is misguided.

To locate those qualities in Browning's Caliban that are useful when examining The Tempest, a paraphrase of the poem is necessary. In the poem's opening lines, Caliban is immersed in a sensuous revery as he describes the island. The day is warm, the slush cool, the plants tickle his hair, and the sun dances like fire on the surface of the sea. Prospero and Miranda are asleep; because summer is not Setebos' time, talk is safe. Setebos dwells in the moon; he is distant and cold. He

is the creator of the island, wind, meteors, sea, and clouds. Caliban muses about Setebos' motivation for creating his world: "It came of being ill at ease:/He hated that He cannot change His cold" (11.31-32). Setebos was incapable of creating a world for himself that possessed the procreative possibilities of the island.

Setebos created out of boredom and spite. If Caliban creates a clay bird or a Caliban with wings, and then mutilates it, the act could not be distinguished from pinching off the legs of a grasshopper. Neither action is essentially different, for Caliban can make and mar clay at will, just as Setebos makes and mars his creations. Consequently, says Caliban, perhaps incorrectly, there can be no moral judgments about Setebos: "Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,/ Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord" (11.98-99). As a god, Setebos has no moral value: he destroys because created things are weak. Just as Caliban, through spite, might destroy a pipe that lures birds, so Setebos, through boredom, might destroy his own creations.

Caliban begins to consider the origins of Setebos' coldness. The answer must be sought from the "something over Setebos" (1.129), the Quiet. Earlier, Caliban gives the stars to another creator; now he says, "This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth,/Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch" (11.137-138). Setebos, in fact,

> perceives he cannot soar
> To what is quiet and hath happy life;
> Next looks down here, and out of very spite
> Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real.
> (11.144-147)

The happy life that the Quiet enjoys arouses Setebos' jealousy. The island is an attempt by Setebos to know the same peace, but Setebos has

created only a cheap bauble. Setebos created the inhabitants of the island with no protection from his spitefulness. His creative ability is, ironically, the desire to destroy. He employs much craft, but not for the "love of what is worked" (1.186). He destroys for no reason, just as Caliban may knock down a whole day's work of his own. It is finally apparent to Caliban that Setebos "hath a spite against me" (1.203). There is no escape; it is foolishness to think of the future. As Caliban would be angered by a squirrel or urchin that, spared today, would expect to be spared tomorrow, so would Setebos. In fact, the only change that may ever come would be

> That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
> And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
> Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.
> (11.281-283)

To use "Caliban" as an avenue into The Tempest involves first considering Caliban's sensuous nature. His vision of the world relies on a great range of images: the sea is criss-crossed by sunbeams that resemble spider webs weaving meshes of fire; the otter is "sleep-wet, black, lithe as a leech" (1.46); the flies have wings of "purple films and pink" (1.258); the auk is a "fire-eye in a ball of foam" (1.47). Caliban views the island through harsh and plain images as well: the first predator is the "badger brown" (1.48); the pie says a "plain word when she finds her prize" (1.52); "black painful beatles roll their ball" (1.260). Caliban even experiences intoxication:

> Look, now I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
> And honey-comb and pods, I have perceived
> Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,--
> Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
> Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain.
> (11.68-72)

Succeeding lines suggest something more about Caliban's sensuous nature:

> Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
> And wanton, wishing I were a bird.
> Put case, unable to be what I wish,
> I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
> Would I not take clay, pinch my Caliban
> Able to fly?--for, there, see, he hath wings,
> And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,
> And, there, a sting to do his foes offence.
> (11.73-80)

Caliban is trying to understand the divine creative ability of Setebos. To do so, he employs what he knows of his own ability to create from the physical world; Caliban, then, parallels his own creative ability with that of Setebos. But Caliban's desire to create a clay bird also reflects his potentially creative imagination. Caliban would create a clay figure composed of diverse elements like the hoopoe's comb and an insect's sting; in other words, his awareness of the physical features of other creatures enables him to characterize the attributes of the divine. These images reveal the sharp eye of a poet who supports his arguments in terms immediate to his (and thus to the reader's) sensations. This ability may account for the earthy "primitiveness" of the poem. But it is no mean accomplishment for Caliban to employ direct sense experience to understand his god.

One of the unfortunate consequences of reading "Caliban" as a poetic treatment of Darwinian theory is the tendency to give the "primitive" man a "primitive" mind. But the insight of a character in a Browning monologue does not rest on his presumably "civilized" or "primitive" condition. Insight rests on the premises of an argument, which in Caliban's case ought to be considered before categorically

rejecting his argument as simply the musings of a "savage." In fact, modern anthropologists argue that the mental efforts of "primitive" men often are surprisingly sophisticated. Indeed, if Jung is at all right, "primitive" men were among the first to develop the symbols that are archetypical of many modern states of mind. The savage man may be sophisticated in his own way, and Browning seems to suggest that Caliban does not lack a kind of sophistication, especially in terms of his inherently poetic nature. Consequently, a sensitive approach to "Caliban" ought to be "civilized" enough to avoid the imperialistic attitudes toward "primitive" people that characterized Browning's own time.

Those who dismiss Caliban as "primitive" begin by observing that he consistently uses the third person when speaking of himself:

> 'Will sprawl, now that the heat of the day is best,
> Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
> With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.
> (11.1-3)

Caliban's use of the third person, these critics argue, implies that he has yet to realize his own independent nature. He has yet to articulate a sense of self and thus remains "primitive." This argument, though, does not account for the complicated stratagems that Caliban uses to elude Setebos. Caliban constantly realizes the consequence of defying Setebos and knows that he must never speak his mind about Setebos unless he has safely hidden himself away. To suggest that Caliban is unaware of himself would be to deny his most immediate sensations--those of pain.

Caliban is more than a "primitive." His acute, if somewhat limited, intelligence draws conclusions important to him. He understands through analogy, and analogy demands an apt and certain sense of the things compared. Now, the function of analogy is explanatory; someone must

receive the explanation. When Caliban employs analogy to understand Setebos it is fair to expect him to address someone. Because an auditor is directly present or alluded to in nearly all of Browning's major monologues and because there appears to be no auditor in "Caliban," the critical task is to find one.

The poem centers on Caliban's sense of an omnipotent and omniscient, but not all-loving deity. Setebos' relation to his world is one of capricious brutality and authority. So, too, is Caliban's relation to the weaker creatures. But before anyone categorizes Caliban as a "primitive," he should remember that Caliban knows no other world. His restriction to the island limits his perspectives, and it is to his credit that he comes to such insight as he does. Caliban is brutal, but so is his life. To reject Caliban because of his cruelty is a result of reading Christian morality into the poem. Because Browning was a Christian does not eliminate the possibility that he may give a monologist another perspective.

Because of Caliban's sense of himself and of the island, his use of analogy becomes clear. The phrase, "so He," appears seven times in the poem; each occurrence marks the completion of an analogy that defines Setebos and Caliban. But Caliban's analogies are not simply explanatory. At one point in the poem, Caliban's vision relies on a complex of perspectives. He sees the island as Setebos' aping of the world of the Quiet; Caliban, in turn, apes the make-believe of Prospero. Here Caliban sees his world in a double perspective. He watches himself observing Setebos, then watches himself as Prospero's slave, a slave who plays at "being Prosper in a way" (l.168), and so finally

completes the analogy to Setebos.

Caliban reveals his perspective on himself when he says that he

> mainly dances on dark nights,
> Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
> And never speaks his mind save housed as now:
> Outside, 'groans, curses.
>
> (11.266-269)

Caliban realizes his shaky position and seeks protection to speak his mind. He monologizes where he thinks Setebos cannot hear him and in a way that will cause Setebos, should he overhear, to misunderstand who is speaking in the monologue. As Caliban says, "'would have Him misconceive, suppose/This Caliban strives hard and ails no less" (11.263-264). There is, then, a public and a private Caliban. The public Caliban is the whipped servant of Prospero and the trembling creation of Setebos. The private Caliban seeks to speak his mind. Caliban uses the third person ironically. He fears Setebos, and if Setebos should overhear him, Caliban hopes that the brutal and capricious god will look elsewhere for the guilty one. Caliban tries to implicate a fictitious culprit and not himself.

There is a deity, the Quiet, that Caliban does not fear. Caliban describes the Quiet in another analogy: as Setebos is over Caliban, so the Quiet is over Setebos. Setebos' spitefulness may come from his realization that he can never enjoy the happy life of the Quiet. Caliban's "primitive" mind, then, seizes on one analogy between himself and Setebos and pushes it far enough to begin to intuit the calmer, less spiteful Quiet. Browning avoids any exhaustive suggestion that the Quiet is the Christian God of Love, but the Quiet is at least a deity without Setebos' capricious brutality. If Caliban intuits the Quiet in

these terms, then he may be able to realize the nature of the God of Love. Of course, he never seems to realize the nature of any deity like the God of Love, but eventually he might. If Caliban can begin to intuit the nature of a deity like the God of Love, then he can begin to realize the nature of the moral universe.

Like Browning's Mr. Sludge, Caliban presses his luck as far as possible to gain an advantage over Setebos.[23] But like nearly all of Browning's monologists who maneuver in this way, Caliban fails. As soon as he reveals his ruse, he shifts to the first person (ll.269-278). He is his own worst enemy; he is the one who slips, allowing Setebos' raven to fly away to tell him all:

> There scuds His raven that has told Him all!
> It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind
> Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
> And fast invading fires begin! White blaze--
> A tree's head snaps--and there, there, there, there, there.
> His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
> Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
> (ll.286-295)

If the ruse to fool Setebos fails, at least obsequiousness and propitiation may work.

For all the apparent subtlety of the ruse, Caliban fails, as he was bound to. For the nature of the problem confronting a Browning monologist is always greater than his grasp, and so the reader is obliged to face his own ironic perspective. His view is larger than Caliban's, and he may accordingly be tempted to criticize Caliban for mental blindness. Caliban is thus "childish" or "primitive." But if

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[22]Shaw, p. 62, observes that this maneuver is highly characteristic of Browning's monologists.

the reader resorts to this sort of generalization, then he must ignore the dramatic form of "Caliban" and, in effect, substitute his own perspective for Caliban's. Of course, readers should employ all of their intelligence to read "Caliban," but they must attempt as well to understand Caliban's own perspectives.

Caliban develops his perspectives ironically. He finds himself in a peculiar position, exercises his intelligence, and discovers a ruse he thinks will delude Setebos. He fears Setebos, but the force of his perspectives compels him beyond his fear--so far beyond that he almost congratulates himself for his wit. What is striking about his position are his refined perspectives on Setebos, himself, and the Quiet. Caliban approaches the issues cautiously and generates a perspective to avoid Setebos as well as a peculiar approach to revealing Setebos' nature.

Because Caliban presents his world in terms most immediate to him, to enter the poem is provisionally to accept his point of view. Caliban's presentation is dramatic because it creates a world and conditions a reader's response to it. Finally, readers and critics must step away from Caliban's vision if they are to come to any complete view of the poem. Indeed, Browning does not suggest for a moment that Caliban's vision is complete or even partially accurate. But the point of the whole dramatic form of "Caliban" is that the reader momentarily accept Caliban's perspectives in order to arrive at his own.

CHAPTER II

"The restored relation."

W. H. Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest."

Composed by the mid-1940's, "The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest,"[24] considered by some to be Auden's finest long piece, appears to be the result of his extensive study of Kierkegaard, study prompted by one of Auden's periodic religious crises. But as with Milton's influence on Wordsworth, Kierkegaard's influence on Auden is so pervasive that, as yet, critics have not attempted intensive Kierkegaardian interpretation of Auden's poem.[25] Consequently, most readings of the poem center on arguments about the relationship of Art to Life. For one critic, the poem is a "semi-dramatized discussion of the relationship between life and art in the context of spiritual possibility";[26] for another, the poem is a "definition and exploration of the relations between the Mirror of Art and the Sea of Life, or

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[24]W. H. Auden, "The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest," Collected Longer Poems (New York, 1965), pp. 199-252; hereafter cited as CLP.

[25]Certain critics do, however, consider the broad outlines of Kierkegaard's thought as they appear in Auden's poem. See especially Edward Callan, "Auden's Ironic Masquerade: Criticism as Morality Play," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXV (January, 1966), 133-143; Herbert Greenberg, Quest for the Necessary: W. H. Auden and the Dilemma of Divided Consciousness (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 117-141 passim; and Justin Replogle, Auden's Poetry (Seattle, 1969), pp. 70-78 passim.

[26]John Fuller, A Reader's Guide to W. H. Auden (London, 1970), p. 157.

Reality."[27] Other critics disagree slightly with the view that Auden's poem is a treatment of the relationships between Art and Life. One of those who disagrees says, "the poem is a loose allegory, a reading of The Tempest as existential parable."[28] Yet another picks up this existential idea to argue that "Auden likes to show how the plots of almost any sort of literature can be turned into existentialist parables."[28] None of these points of view, however, significantly excludes the others. If the poem suggests something about Art and Life, it also implicitly suggests something about human existence.[30]

The sub-title of the poem is "A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest," but nowhere in the poem is there any full critical analysis of the play. Auden's poem, which resembles a closet drama with the action occurring after a performance of The Tempest, provides instead a number of suggestive insights into Shakespeare's play. In Auden's poem the characters of The Tempest--except for Caliban--continue in their roles, but the poem is not Auden's attempt to create his own characters as a contrast to those in The Tempest. Rather, Auden's poem represents his peculiar understanding of the issues he sees behind the character involvements in The Tempest. In this respect, Auden's poem

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[27]Monroe K. Spears, The Poetry of W. H. Auden: The Disenchanted Island (New York, 1963), p. 218.

[28]Greenberg, p. 122.

[29]Replogle, p. 71.

[30]Auden himself has the last word when he says of the relationship between Art and Life, "either the relation between them is so simple that nothing need be said, or so complicated that nothing can be said." Quoted by John Hollander, "Auden at Sixty," Atlantic Monthly, CCXX (July, 1967), 86.

becomes an examination of the failures implicit in the human desire to order experience.

A list of generalizations that will be clarified shortly can illustrate the ways Auden's poem illuminates The Tempest. Auden's insight into the minor characters is striking. For example, he perceives in Antonio's and Sebastian's reactions to Prospero that his revenge cannot account for their essentially evil natures. Ferdinand's and Miranda's expression of affection suggests that they believe their world complete. This belief is common to Shakespeare's lovers and helps to clarify some of the ways Shakespeare deals with individual perception in his play. Alonso's advice to Ferdinand obliquely suggests that Shakespeare's Prospero may have misunderstood his own rule of Milan because he relied on advisers and became too self-confident. Auden's recasting of Gonzalo ignores the hints about the savage man that Shakespeare's Gonzalo provides, hints that support a view of Gonzalo's sentiments in The Tempest as a counter to Prospero's imperialistic attitudes toward Caliban.

But Auden's poem is most useful when dealing with Prospero, Caliban and Ariel. Auden regards Prospero's control of Ariel as symptomatic of Prospero's failure to understand the imagination; hence, to realize his inability to organize experience. In The Tempest, the dynamics of the relationship between Prospero and Ariel can partly be seen in Auden's terms. Consequently, in The Tempest, Prospero's growing realizations of the limits to his revenge revolve, in one way, around Ariel. Although Auden places Caliban at the center of his poem and gives the "savage" man the task of surveying the issues implicit in "The Sea and

the Mirror," Caliban's religious conclusions actually belong to Prospero in the play. Thus, when Auden's Caliban concludes with a consideration of Grace, to him a mirrored reflection of Mercy, he is actually considering the quality of Prospero's forgiving attitude in The Tempest as well as the comments about religion Prospero explores in the epilogue of Shakespeare's play.

Auden's poem is a long, sometimes baffling combination of lyric poetry and complicated prose; hence, a paraphrase of the poem should preface an examination of its content. Auden divides the poem into three sections: "Prospero to Ariel," "The Supporting Cast, Sotto Voce," and "Caliban to the Audience." The poem also has a short "Preface (The Stage Manager to the Critics)" and a short "Postscript (Ariel to Caliban)."

In the "Preface" the stage manager addresses the critics and first concerns himself with the nature of drama, a theme Caliban later develops. Drama, the stage manager suggests, is a form of art that deals with human wonder; it is a form in which the lovely lady can be sawn in half without any fear of death, as well as a form that suggests the terrible tensions in a hero's life. The only problem, though, is that drama cannot really suggest the ways to confront the problems of every-day reality:

> We are wet with sympathy now;
> Thanks for the evening; but how
> Shall we satisfy when we meet,
> Between Shall-I and I-Will,
> The lion's mouth whose hunger
> No metaphors can fill?
>
> (CLP, p. 202)

This overture of a sort completed, Prospero begins to converse

with Ariel in the first major division of the poem, "Prospero to Ariel." Prospero asks Ariel (for Auden, the spirit of imagination) to consider for a moment the nature of Prospero's magic. Prospero realizes some consolation in Ariel's departure, for, as Prospero says, "I am glad that I have freed you,/So at last I can really believe I shall die./ For under your influence death is inconceivable" (CLP, p. 203). Indeed, Prospero's contact with Ariel has brought Prospero to an awareness that he has really "got away with nothing" (CLP, p. 204). Prospero suggests that his fascination with Ariel came from a kind of disillusionment, for, in looking into Ariel's eyes, says Prospero, "All we are not stares back at what we are" (CLP, p. 204). Somehow, Prospero implies, Ariel manages to show mankind its sorry limits. Indeed, Ariel exposes, in a reverse way, man's conscience, for to Prospero Ariel suggests "To those who are not true,/A statue with no figleaf has/A pornographic flavour" (CLP, p. 205). Ariel cannot exist without exposing the truth of man's limits; he even looks for "likely victims" (CLP, p. 206). Ariel can "spot the weakness" (CLP, p. 206) in human beings, weakness exemplified by Prospero's breach of "both of the promises I made as an apprentice;--/To hate nothing and to ask nothing for its love" (CLP, p. 206). In fact, breaking these promises led to Antonio's treason and Caliban's "wreck/That sprawls in the weeds and will not be repaired" (CLP, p. 207). Continuing his re-appraisal of himself, Prospero considers the other characters, especially Ferdinand and Miranda, whose bliss, says Prospero, may not withstand the forces of time. Yet Prospero admits he may overestimate their problems.

In all, Prospero considers himself to have ended his days of

imaginative drunkenness and to have become suddenly "cold sober" (CLP, p. 208). With this new attitude, he realizes that he is part of some tremendous journey, "and I have actually to take it, inch by inch,/ Alone and on foot, without a cent in my pocket" (CLP, p. 209). But Prospero cannot refuse to release Ariel, and anyway Gonzalo comes "with a solemn face" (CLP, p. 209) to summon Prospero to the ship. Prospero ends his comments by releasing Ariel to his own element and begins to take "the silent passage/Into discomfort" (CLP, p. 210).

In the second major division of the poem, "The Supporting Cast, Sotto Voce," each minor character soliloquizes while on the return voyage to Milan. Antonio begins by ridiculing Prospero's "grouping" (CLP, p. 211). To Antonio, the justice Prospero has accomplished is a little too perfect, for, as Antonio says, "while I stand outside/Your circle, the will to charm is still there" (CLP, p. 212). Antonio sees himself in terms of total self-will, and as long as Antonio remains unchanged, Prospero can never actually complete his revenge. Antonio comments as well at the end of every other character's reflections. His comments always tend to deny outright or suggest a cynical conclusion to each character's point of view. Auden counterpoints Antonio's cynicism with Ferdinand's calm assurance that his Miranda embodies a love that understands "The Right Required Time, The Real Right Place, O Light" (CLP, p. 213). Next, Stephano asks his "belly" to embrace him "like a bride" (CLP, p. 213). "Behind your skirts" (CLP, p. 213), Stephano hides from disappointment, recoiling from any shock, until it becomes finally difficult to discover, as Stephano says, "who/Is self and sovereign, I or You?" (CLP, p. 214).

Gonzalo soliloquizes next. Even though he realizes that he predicted Prospero's return to Milan, Gonzalo feels no pride. Somehow, the counsellor's mind got in the way of that truth and

> by speculation froze
> Vision into an idea,
> Irony into a joke,
> Till I stood convicted of
> Doubt and insufficient love.
>
> (CLP, p. 215)

Nonetheless, in Gonzalo's reevaluation is a certain confidence that his remaining life, "a simple locus now" (CLP, p. 216), can be comforted by the "Already There" (CLP, p. 216), the spiritual possibility that comforts man. Adrian and Francisco speak next with a couplet on death, "Good little sunbeams must learn to fly,/But it's madly ungay when the goldfish die" (CLP, p. 216). After their comment, Alonso muses over a letter on statecraft he will give his son. Ferdinand should keep a regal bearing at all times, but must realize that danger lurks everywhere. "Expect no help from others" (CLP, p. 217), advises Alonso; counsellors often can be as dangerous as helpful. In silence the prince must learn about ruling and Ferdinand must "trust his embarassment" (CLP, p. 218), for pride is as deadly as evil advice. In prosperity Ferdinand must guard against complacency, and if he fails, he should thank his despair for teaching him humility, for in misfortune the prince may happen upon the "spring in the desert, the fruitful/Island in the sea, where flesh and mind/Are delivered from mistrust" (CLP, p. 219).

The master and the boatswain now consider the sailor's life; broken hearts are not uncommon in the ports they have seen, but "tears are round, the sea is deep:/Roll them overboard and sleep" (CLP, p. 220).

Next, Sebastian pauses to consider his inherent good fortune in the foiled plot to murder Alonso. Though Sebastian considers himself "wicked still," he realizes the mercy in waking "without a crown" (CLP, p. 220). Sebastian knows now that his political imagination grew excessive, that thinking Alonso "a dream/I should not love because I had no proof" (CLP, p. 221), was a foolish lie. Sebastian can thank, then, "bleak Exposure on whose sword,/Caught unawares" (CLP, p. 221) he pricked himself alive. Reality confronts Sebastian with the end of his plot as well as the continuance of his life. Trinculo delivers the penultimate soliloquy. As a jester, he entertains by creating fantasy, but in so doing he wanders far away from the "solid world" (CLP, p. 222). Terrified by his inability to reach out and grasp reality, Trinculo hopes that "I, like shorter men,/May get my joke and die" (CLP, p. 223). Miranda closes this section of the poem by considering Ferdinand. Her villanelle concerns Ferdinand's effect upon her. Before he appeared, her life was fantasy-like, populated with "The Black Man," "The Witch," and "the Ancient" (CLP, p. 223). Ferdinand, says Miranda, "kissed me awake" (CLP, p. 223). Now both can "remember [their] changing garden" where they "are linked as children in a circle dancing" (CLP, p. 224). Ferdinand's love completes Miranda, and both can now confront the mutable world.

The third major division of Auden's poem, "Caliban to the Audience," is the poem's longest and most complex series of observations about Shakespeare's play and the relationship of imagination to reality. Caliban's role is an odd one. Unlike Shakespeare's Caliban, Auden's is highly sophisticated. He speaks in the prose style of the late Henry

James, a style often as convoluted in content as in expression. Caliban's major perspectives, though, are not finally incomprehensible, and fall into three basic divisions. First Caliban speaks as the "echo" of the audience, adopting the voice they would use if they could approach Shakespeare to question him about the meaning of Caliban's presence in The Tempest. Next, Caliban addresses those in the audience who came to learn something about the nature of creativity. Finally, he addresses the audience as a whole about the Truth dramatic performance presents.

Perhaps the most immediately confusing aspect of the first division of Caliban's address is his attempt to speak as the voice of the audience. It must be remembered that what Caliban says is an imaginative hunch about what the audience actually cares to say. Caliban begins by looming "wretchedly" into the "confused picture" (CLP, p. 225) of an audience whose mood after viewing the play is scarcely comfortable. Caliban momentarily assumes the role of spokesman for the audience, an audience initially concerned about the meaning of Prospero's plea at the end of The Tempest that they release him from their spell. The audience, at least as Caliban speaks for them, can release no one. Even if they could, there would be the embarrassing figure of Caliban to dispose of. The "Native Muse" of the theater, whose only "test of the theatrical, as of the gastronomic" is the "mixed perfected brew" (CLP, p.226), seems ironically incapable of accepting Caliban. He is the one intrusion the muse (the dramatic imagination) will not tolerate; as the child of the "Awful Enemy" (existential reality) (CLP, p. 227), Caliban is a potential rapist in the world of the theater. He violates decorum by "upsetting [the muse's] guests" (CLP, p. 228) and even represents an

assault on the moral law that, in drama, as Caliban says,

> the timid not only deserve but actually win the fair, and it is the socially and physically unemphatic David who lays low the gorilla-chested Goliath with one well-aimed custard pie. (CLP, p. 229)

Even more enraging is the realization that the function of drama--which is to present a "perfectly tidiable" (CLP, p. 229) case of disorder--has been impaired. Caliban represents the breach of the boundaries between this world (real life) and that world (the play). Without boundaries there can be no certainty about human desires. Without the order of limits life becomes anarchy. Still speaking as the echo of the audience, Caliban says that the "mirror held up to nature," presumably the central idea of Shakespeare's dramatic aesthetic, is

> a phrase misleading in its aphoristic sweep, but indicative at least of one aspect of the relations between the real and the imagined, their mutual reversal of value, for isn't the essential artistic strangeness to which your [Shakespeare's] citation of the sinisterly biased image would point just this: that on the far side of the mirror [in drama] the general will to compose, to form at all costs a felicitous pattern becomes the necessary cause of any particular effort to live or act or triumph or vary, instead of being, as, in so far as it emerges at all, it is on this side [every-day life], their accidental effect? (CLP, p. 232)

Continuing to speak for the audience, Caliban asks, "is it possible that, not content with inveigling Caliban into Ariel's kingdom, you [Shakespeare] have also let loose Ariel in Caliban's" (CLP, p. 233). The Awful Enemy is Reality itself and if Reality, in the figure of Caliban, plunders about in the perfect world of art, which itself mirrors man's condition, then it would seem that Shakespeare commits the ultimate affront to drama--he hopelessly upsets the boundaries between real life and the play. And if the presence of the real in the world

of the imagined has upset the oxcart, that is a "mere bagatelle" (CLP, p. 234) compared to what Ariel, let loose in the world of reality, would do. The audience, as Caliban speaks for them, is clearly upset:

> We want no Ariel here, breaking down our picket fences in the name of fraternity, seducing our wives in the name of romance, and robbing us of our sacred pecuniary deposits in the name of justice.
>
> (CLP, p. 234)

Before Caliban answers any of the audience's supposed questions, he pauses momentarily to address those in the audience who came to learn, or any "gay apprentice in the magical art" (the young artist) who desires to grasp the workings of the "artistic contraption" (the processes of imagination) (CLP, p. 234). Auden's young magician-artist, like Prospero, heard "imprisoned Ariel call for help" (CLP, p. 234) and Ariel, grateful for his release, becomes the magician's familiar (the representation of imagination). At first the relationship rewards the young artist. "Your eye," says Caliban, addressing the young artist,

> has already spotted the tremor of the lips in that infinitesimal moment when the lie was getting its balance, your ear already picked up the heart's low whimper which the capering legs were determined to stifle, your nose detected on love's breath the trace of ennui which foretells his early death, or the despair just starting to smoulder at the base of the scholar's brain which years hence will suddenly blow it up with one appalling laugh.
>
> (CLP, p. 236)

Inspired by Ariel, the young artist's efforts are successful. Even when sententious, his work is good; at its best it is the "rich red personal flower of the grave and grand" (CLP, p. 236). But in time silences creep in between Ariel and the artist. The silences become more prolonged until the artist no longer can think of anything further to ask of Ariel. Ariel "gets inexplicably but maddeningly" (CLP, p. 237) on

the artist's nerves, until, approaching him in fury, the artist discovers that the once friendly servant is now a "gibbering fist-clenched creature" (CLP, p. 237) clearly resembling Caliban.

Sensing the opportunity implicit in the situation, Caliban begins to address the artist in the first person. Forgetting Ariel, Caliban begins to talk as if he were the injured and mistreated servant. Caliban has been ignored while the artist has gathered all the truth art can admire from a "distant comfortable veranda" (CLP, p. 238). The young artist has held Caliban in check, preventing him from going his "whole free-wheeling way to disorder" (CLP, p. 238). And now, at the end of the relationship, clearly between Caliban and the artist, the possibility, as Caliban says,

> of my getting a tolerably new master and you a tolerably new man, lies in our both learning, if possible and as soon as possible, to forgive and forget the past, and to keep our respective hopes for the future, within moderate, very moderate, limits.
>
> (CLP, p. 239)

In the third section of his address, Caliban turns back to the audience as a whole in order to answer the questions they seem to have raised at the beginning of his monologue. Appropriately, Caliban offers no answers to the questions. The ability of the audience to put the questions so anxiously demonstrates that they possess the answers:

> To your questions I shall attempt no direct reply, for the mere fact that you have been so anxiously able to put them is in itself sufficient proof that you possess their answers.
>
> (CLP, pp. 239-240)

So Caliban, who now addresses the audience on behalf of himself and Ariel, tells the audience that all their childhood illusions, like cheap baubles burst one by one, have vanished. The child, says Caliban,

wonders at his world. It is just as reasonable that a chair be a chair as a horse, or that a poker turn into Hector's sword, or that his parents call him Tommy (CLP, p. 240). Realizing that illusion has ended, the audience takes its first step away from disillusionment. The journey has little glamour; departures are from the same "Grandly Average Place" (CLP, p. 241).

Departures in this journey of existence have some compensations--good food and a good shave--but there is one disquieting implication. When the traveler departs, he ventures into foreign lands where he is likely to call on Ariel and Caliban for help. Caliban cautions the traveler about what will happen if he calls for aid from either. "Pity me, Captain," Caliban imagines the traveler who seeks his aid as saying, "pity a poor old stranded sea-salt whom an unlucky voyage has wrecked on the desolate mahogany coast of this bar with nothing left him but his big moustache" (CLP, p. 242). Caliban cannot refuse and so he transports the voyager not to any "specific Eden" (CLP, p. 243), but to a country of geysers, volcanoes, and dazzling moonlight where the traveler will be

> surrounded by an infinite passivity and purely arithmetical disorder which is only open to perception, and with nowhere to go on to, your existence is indeed free at last to choose its own meaning, that is, to plunge headlong into despair and fall through silence fathomless and dry, all fact your single drop, all value your pure alas.
>
> (CLP, p. 244)

To seek assistance from Ariel reveals that the traveler yearns for release from the "terrible mess" of this "particularized life" (CLP, p. 245) and hopes to be taken to that "blessed realm" of the "self-sufficient, absolutely reasonable One" (CLP, p. 245). Ariel, too, cannot

refuse the request, but he brings the traveler to

> a nightmare which has all the wealth of exciting action and all the emotional poverty of an adventure story for boys . . . old men catch dreadful coughs, little girls get their arms twisted, flames run whooping through woods.
> (CLP, p. 245)

These are the "alternative routes" by which the "human effort" in its attempt to "make its fortune arrives all eager at its abruptly dreadful end" (CLP, p. 247).

Caliban now concludes. The desire to follow either Ariel or Caliban should demonstrate to the audience its "condition of estrangement from the truth" (CLP, p. 247). Moreover, this condition represents a real problem for the dramatist. Art informs men of the gap between what they are and what they are "commanded without any question to become" (CLP, p. 247). The more truthfully the artist depicts man, the less truthfully can he indicate man's estrangement from truth; conversely, the brighter he depicts truth, the more faintly appears man's real condition. The artist must make men aware of the gap without allowing them the foolish pleasure of assuming that awareness is itself a "bridge" (CLP, p. 248).

The dramatist, then, "as if it lay in his power to solve this dilemma" (CLP, p. 248), beats about for some image to define the original drama which "aroused his imitative passion" (CLP, p. 248). In that drama flesh was "really sore and sorry"; wounds did not come off "after a good wash"; the suicidal heroine could not pick herself up after the performance (CLP, p. 248).

In a way, says Caliban, these images reflect the performance of The Tempest the audience has just seen. The costumes were ill-fitting

and mothy; the piano was damp for too long; the landscape was a forest of holes. The production is over; the performers stand "downstage with red faces and no applause" (CLP, p. 249). "We at last see ourselves as we are," says Caliban, "swaying out on the ultimate wind-whipped cornice that overhangs the unabiding void" (CLP, p. 249). At that moment "we hear . . . the real Word which is our only raison d'être" (CLP, p. 249). The blessing of the "Wholly Other Life" (CLP, p. 250) predominates; it is in the "negative image of Judgment that we can positively envisage Mercy" (CLP, p. 250).

"The Sea and the Mirror" concludes with the short "Postscript (Ariel to Caliban)." Ariel, the spirit of imagination, asks Caliban, the representative of reality, for his pity:

> Weep no more but pity me . . .
> Helplessly in love with you,
> Elegance, art, fascination,
> Fascinated by
> Drab mortality.
>
> (CLP, p. 251)

Ariel asks Caliban to "wish for nothing," for any wish from Caliban tempts Ariel, who "only/As I am can I/Love you as you are" (CLP, p. 251). Ariel concludes the postscript by suggesting that he and Caliban are comrades whose union, when divided, becomes "one evaporating sigh" (CLP, p. 252).

Auden's poem ranges over a considerable number of topics. But it should be clear that Auden centers his poem in the Caliban section; thus, an interpretation of the whole poem ought to center there as well. One of the most unusual aspects of Caliban is his apparent change from Shakespeare's "salvage and deformed slave." The change reflects a kind of ironic intensification on Auden's part. The audience confronts an

urbane character and may choose to see him only as the actor who plays the role of Caliban. In that case, Caliban becomes a figure not unlike those in Ionesco or Genet--an actor who informs the audience about what they "really" see. Or the audience may choose to see Auden's Caliban as the continuation of Shakespeare's. In that case, Caliban becomes the center for such understanding of The Tempest as Auden suggests. Either approach will do justice to the Caliban section; both catch the audience off guard. Frederick P. W. McDowell puts it this way:

> From our knowledge of The Tempest, it represents a comic reversal of expectation for the slave to be an even more subtle philosopher than the master and a more suave man of the world.[31]

There is a problem in this attempt to catch the audience off guard, a problem that is probably a consequence of Auden's ironic perspectives in the poem. There can be no theater audience for Auden's poem, but Caliban acts as if there were. In other words, at the outset, a reader of Auden's poem may distrust Caliban. A residual suspicion about his merits as a commentator on Shakespeare's play may linger even after Caliban completes his monologue. Caliban immediately assumes the role of spokesman for the audience, assigns the audience a kind of uncomfortable response to the production they have just seen, and then proceeds to consider a number of different positions about their response. Readers are likely to distrust Caliban because there is no evidence that an audience exists. Closet drama, if it is performed, can only be performed

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[31]Frederick P. W. McDowell, "The Sea and the Mirror," in Auden: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Monroe K. Spears (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964), p. 145.

in the theater of the imagination, but therein lies the answer to the problem of the audience in Caliban's address. The audience must be as fictive as the characters, and any theater of the imagination must include the audience who have just witnessed the performance of The Tempest. In other words, readers have a perspective that is superior to, but dependent upon, Caliban's. But to understand what Auden's Caliban has to say about The Tempest as it has been performed implies provisionally accepting Caliban as the legitimate spokesman for the audience. A "willing suspension of disbelief" is as necessary for understanding Caliban as it is for appreciating an actual dramatic performance of The Tempest.

A word of caution, though, should be introduced before dealing with the issues of the Caliban section. Auden's poem is not The Tempest, and Caliban's commentary relies on an elaborate scheme of contemporary aesthetic, social, and religious speculations. In other words, Auden may have overdone. In his zeal to present an exercise in transcendent awareness, Auden stacks the cards in favor of Caliban. It is finally a shade unbelievable that any audience would respond as Caliban suggests. It is even more unbelievable that the issues that precipitate the audience's anxiety, as Caliban argues, are the only important issues that a viewing of The Tempest might generate. Caliban's mind is essentially dualistic. The terms of his arguments are nearly always reductive; the audience experiences the clash between drama and reality, between existence and the Word, but little else.

Caliban suspects that the audience is somewhat upset by his intrusion as the representative of reality into Shakespeare's drama, a world

that is "perfectly tidiable." Because Caliban sees himself at the center of the audience's apparent reactions, he attempts to explain the nature of their uneasiness. Caliban is really commenting on the audience's response to the relationship between drama and reality, a response that is itself a reflection of their existence. Moreover, Caliban presents his arguments in an orderly fashion, although the Jamesian style may throw the reader off. He approaches the audience didactically, providing them with a number of observations that will, he hopes, lead them toward understanding of religious truth. Caliban's often almost compulsive flippancy might indicate a kind of insincerity; at least his tone is unexpected in someone who attempts to describe religious truth. Auden's Caliban loves artifice and to this degree he reflects Auden's

> consciousness of himself as an actor and his desire to lead the reader to similar self-awareness. The same artifice, unfortunately, offers the reader a way to escape real self-examination, not merely by understanding the ingenious mechanics of the trap, but by entertaining satisfaction at his power to do so.[32]

Yet, in a way, this is Auden's point. The artifice can be either glamorous or repulsive; it must assume its own order, however, and just possibly, it will aid the audience in assuming theirs.

The first set of Caliban's observations concerns the audience's supposed reaction to his presence in The Tempest. As the child of the Awful Enemy, reality, Caliban threatens the decorous world of drama. As an intruder into the drama, he represents the breach of the bound-

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[32]John G. Blair, The Poetic Art of W. H. Auden (Princeton, 1965), p. 192.

aries between life and art. The audience came to see disorder tidied up, and there on the stage, they see Caliban. If reality, in the figure of Caliban, wanders about the world of imagination, then imagination, in the figure of Ariel, may be flying about in the real world. What all the apparent uneasiness implies is that the audience is unwilling to accept the conditions of their own existence. The audience, at least as Caliban sees it, considers the will to compose the "necessary cause" of drama, but in every-day existence the same will is an "accidental effect." The only distinctions the audience is capable of making concern the boundaries between drama and existence. The audience sees in drama a kind of world they yearn for, a world where order predominates, but at the same time they are unwilling or incapable of detecting order in their own lives. The audience exists in a sort of middle ground; they see the usefulness of order, yet are incapable of ordering. The audience, as Caliban sees them, experience a kind of anxiety, a condition sometimes useful in propelling people to understanding the religious truth they may have forgotten or never knew.

Before Caliban expands on the themes that demonstrate the nature of the anxiety the audience experiences, he pauses to address the young artists in the audience. At this point, Caliban provides a number of comments about the origins of the artist's decreasing imaginative creativity in his later years. As time passes, the artist becomes less capable of requesting further services from Ariel. When the artist attempts to dismiss Ariel, he comes face to face with Caliban. The artist's acquaintance with the imagination simply postpones his acquaintance with reality. Once the artist meets reality he has no choice, as

Caliban sees it, but to accept reality and to live within moderate limits. Reality, or its overwhelming presence, seems to be the cause of a decline in the artist's productivity. The growing inability to create imaginatively leads to the artist's awareness of reality, yet, ironically, the awareness of reality checks future productivity.

What Caliban insists on here is a conviction he later makes explicit. The audience later learns of the gap between what they are and what they should be, and looks to the artist to bridge the gap, but Caliban implies that it does not lie within the power of the artist to do so. The artist cannot, because he is no more immune to the consequences of the conflict between art and life, between Ariel and Caliban, than is the audience. He may experience a different kind of anxiety, but he experiences anxiety nonetheless.

This aside completed, Caliban turns back to the main drift of his argument, the anxious reaction of the audience to his presence in The Tempest. As Caliban sees it, the audience is quite aware of the middle ground they inhabit. The end of childish illusions has sent the audience on a journey that defines their very existence. But even yet the audience looks for an end to anxiety. Some will seek Caliban's aid; that is, they will embrace reality alone. Their fate will be a world of silence devoid of values. Auden suggests, then, that a complete acceptance of reality is illusory. There will be those in the audience who will seek Ariel's aid; that is, they will employ imagination alone to govern their loves. The consequence for them is emotional poverty; order will be too complete; their despair will equal the despair of the followers of reality.

All of these arguments fall together in an attempt to acquaint the audience with the true nature of their anxiety. Caliban has carefully led the audience to an impasse that is really a demonstration of a gap between themselves and truth. Even the performers of The Tempest are not immune to a kind of anxiety. Their performance was neither spectacular nor grand and they stand about in embarrassed silence. Caliban has led everyone to a paradoxical situation; hence, his commentary is, in a sense, pointless. Just as the dramatist must not allow the audience to feel that he has presented any complete answer to the dilemma of their existence, so, by implication, Caliban brings the audience to a place where there is no way out, at least not by exercise of the will alone.

But if the paradox holds true for the audience, it holds true as well for the other characters in Auden's poem. In fact, if the kind of dead-end existence the audience faces arises out of their failure to understand either Caliban or Ariel, then the same problem confronts the other characters. For the other characters in Auden's poem confront, by and large, the end of certain illusions. Stephano, Trinculo, the master and boatswain, and Adrian and Francisco face this problem in a somewhat minimal way, for in their comments runs a single theme: the continuing concern with self identity. Stephano's "self" is his belly; Trinculo's, his jesting; the sailors', their cavalier affairs; Adrian and Francisco, their foppish manners. But the minor significance of these characters may be misleading. Auden inserts them as peripheral commentary on the broader issues of the inherent limits in any attempt to control human affairs. A concern with self avoids the real problems

expressed in Caliban's address; to try to discover self either leads a character away from the problems he must confront or merely begins the journey Caliban describes. For whatever the issues of Caliban's address, they exist beyond any one person's ability to control by a solid awareness of self. The problems of Caliban's address are larger than human personality.

In Antonio, though, is a suggestion that a strongly self-willed person can symbolize the failure of any attempt to organize human experience. Antonio's will is his own; all of Prospero's magic cannot harmonize Antonio with the other characters. But if Antonio stands for Prospero's failures, he also represents the ultimate limit of self-definition. Antonio comments after Alonso's speech:

> My empire is my own
> Dying Alonso does not know
> The diadem Antonio
> Wears in his world alone.
> (CLP, p. 219)

Antonio's world is his self; nothing exists beyond his own will. In such a state Antonio will never know the gap between his condition and the truth; he will never realize what he is to be. If Antonio does not realize his implicit estrangement from the truth, he will never understand the quality of Grace, the quality Caliban's monologue works toward. Thus, while Antonio may represent the failure of Prospero's magic, he also represents the greater failure of self-will. Antonio wills himself away from Grace.

Alonso's advice to his son, in some respects, provides a counter to Antonio's self-will. Alonso advises Ferdinand to avoid both counsellors and complacency. The prince is a lonely man who must not be

deluded by false guides. Yet, in loneliness the prince experiences a certain self-awareness; if the prince must not trust advisers or his own self-confidence, then he must trust his own uncertainties. In a way, Alonso's advice is a parallel to Caliban's commentary. Advisers attempt to guide the prince on Caliban's level, the level of the real world, while complacency operates in Ariel's world, the world of imagination, a world of grand schemes and greater glory. And a prince who manages to follow both Ariel and Caliban invites not only his own inevitable ruin, but also doubles his woe, bringing about the collapse of his state.

If Alonso's advice is a measure of princely success, it is also a measure of princely failure, a measure of Prospero's limits. Prospero is not as cynical as Antonio, but he realizes that he has failed in all that he has attempted. He may have restored a kind of harmony, but even Prospero questions the epitome of that harmony--the lovers. Their passion may not last; the fantasy that Prospero sees in their present affections may not tolerate Ferdinand's "brave world." Like Gonzalo, who realizes the folly of failing to approach even a good fantasy, Prospero quietly accepts defeat. But unlike Gonzalo, Prospero does not approach any glimmering religious awareness. At least the "Already There" is some comfort to Gonzalo; Prospero can only silently fulfill the lonely journey of his remaining years. Indeed, in that respect, Auden's Caliban realizes what his master never does--that Grace comforts man.

But Auden's somewhat unfair depiction of Prospero as an embittered old man is a consequence of Auden's understanding of Prospero's rela-

tionship to Caliban and Ariel. Auden writes:

> Shakespeare has written Caliban's part in such a way that, while we have to admit that Caliban is both brutal and corrupt, a "lying slave" who can be prevented from doing mischief only "by stripes not kindness," we cannot help feeling that Prospero is largely responsible for his corruption, and that, in the debate between them, Caliban has the best of the argument.[33]

In other words, Auden concludes that in The Tempest, Caliban occupies a comparatively superior position to Prospero. Auden's poem, then, may be a way of discussing that superiority, for Auden's Caliban clearly possesses the most comprehensive point of view. Auden also provides a further hint about his sense of Prospero's problems. Suggesting that Ariel is "the invisible spirit of imagination," Auden observes:

> Without imagination I remain an innocent animal, unable to become anything but what I already am. In order to become what I should become, therefore, I have to put my imagination to work, and limit its playful activity to imagining those possibilities which, for me, are both permissible and real; if I allow it to become the master and play exactly as it likes, then I shall remain in a dreamlike state of imagining everything I might become without getting around to ever becoming anything.[34]

Prospero's despair comes out of the context of his relationship to Ariel. On the one hand, Ariel is able to "spot the weakness" in Prospero that culminates in Prospero's attempt to organize the events on the island around his own notion of justice. There is no way to check Prospero when he acts with Ariel's aid. But to a certain degree, Ariel begins to do as he wishes, for if he sees Prospero's weakness, he also sees the way to gain the upper hand. Prospero's imagination has soared

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[33]W. H. Auden, "Baalaam and His Ass," in The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays (New York, 1948), p. 129.

[34]"Baalaam and His Ass," p. 133.

out of control; consequently, he has overwhelmed reality. Prospero's actions, then, have been a heightening of Ariel's abilities. For as the postscript reveals, Caliban fascinates Ariel. Prospero has allowed Ariel to play freely with existence, and now that Ariel must leave, Prospero despairs. Because he has been unaware of the existential reality of the gap between what he is and what he is to become, at life's end Prospero must accept what he is. Like all men, he must begin the journey through despair. Yet because the journey confronts him so quickly, and his failings have been so great, Auden's Prospero may never realize the Grace that comforts men.

Up to the point, then, when Caliban introduces his audience to the dilemma of existence, "The Sea and the Mirror" sustains an advancing argument about the limitations implicit in a desire to order a world bounded by Caliban and Ariel. But Caliban offers an answer to the anxiety and futility of human existence. When the limits of existence become distressingly apparent, then "we are blessed by that Wholly Other Life." The answer is Grace. When existence becomes neither solely the reality of Caliban nor the imaginativeness of Ariel, then God's Word surfaces as the only Truth. Indeed, Caliban finally understands one implication of the "mirror-held-up-to-nature" metaphor. In the negative, or reversed, image of Judgment, "we can positively envisage Mercy." Judgment, or the attempt to order experience, reverses in the "mirror" of drama, so that men realize that only in seeing turned about what must first seem certain can they begin to understand the mercy in God's love. Auden's point, specifically, is that drama, if correctly viewed, leads to transcendent awareness. Drama is a kind of

exercise designed to restore the conditions of religious truth the audience may have forgotten or ignored. The Tempest, as a representative of this kind of drama, is like an orphic spell in which the "sounded note is the restored relation" (CLP, p. 250).

CHAPTER III

"Their high wrongs."

Shakespeare's The Tempest.

Criticism of The Tempest is not easy, especially if the variety of current critical interpretations is any measure of the play's difficulties. But if interpretation focuses on Prospero's inadequate realizations of the dimensions to his revenge, as well as on the moral certainties which support his rigorous sense of justice, the critic's task can be eased. First, Prospero's approach to the minor characters should be studied, for they are part of the key to the moral revaluation Prospero comes to. Second, the completion of Prospero's revenge needs close examination since it represents the culmination of his interventions into the lives of his enemies as well as his realization of his limited ethical insight. Third, detailed interpretation of Caliban and Ariel becomes essential, not only because they are "boundaries" to the play's action, but also because Prospero ultimately accepts their natures and reacts to them accordingly. In fact, the theme of government, especially Prospero's rule of the island compared to Gonzalo's idealistic political theories, points out Prospero's limited understanding of Caliban. Fourth, Prospero's final ethical awareness as it rises out of his elusive and ambiguous insights into the nature of mutability (IV.i.148-163) requires intensive examination.

I

Prospero's comment in Act IV that "we are such stuff/As dreams are made on" (IV.i.156-157) suggests a dominant and perplexing motif to Shakespeare's final romance--the pattern of telescoping perspectives. A consideration of this pattern does not illuminate all of the play, but the awareness that the minor characters generally act within Prospero's perspectives, while he acts within the perspective of what Ariel and Caliban represent, can be a useful handhold. For these perspectives, which involve Shakespeare's treatment of the characters' perceptual faculties, are crucial for development of the ongoing action.

Perception is, of course, too broad a term unless qualified. For one thing, perception concerns direct sense experience; consequently, what individual characters see and hear becomes important for understanding Prospero's revenge. Sometimes, however, individual characters do not undergo direct sense experience, in which case a motif of story-telling becomes a substitute. Second, the court party and the drunkards try to understand their situation only through actions they themselves experience. But sometimes their desire to understand is misdirected because the experience they have of the island often reflects Prospero's interventions. The result is a third qualification of perception--how characters act because of what they understand--and it suggests incomplete awareness of the problematical physical nature of the island. For as Prospero maneuvers to regain his lost dukedom, he capitalizes on his ability to create perceptual illusions that enable at least some of the minor characters to understand his own ethical convictions.

These convictions originate in the indignation he feels for his brother Antonio's past treachery in usurping the Dukedom of Milan from him. For years Prospero has nurtured an unqualified contempt for his brother's actions; in fact, Antonio's villainy is part of what Prospero calls the "dark backward and abyssm of time" implicit to Miranda's memory. Prospero creates the tempest because he refuses to allow the occasion of the Neopolitan court's return from Claribel's marriage to the King of Tunis pass by:

> I find my zenith doth depend upon
> A most auspicious star, whose influence
> If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
> Will ever after droop.
>
> (I.ii.181-184)

Time has given Prospero self-confident certainty about the moral rightness of the revenge he is undertaking.

Prospero blames Antonio for his own loss of Milan, but on this issue Auden has a penetrating comment. In Alonso's advice to Ferdinand in "The Sea and the Mirror," Auden obliquely discusses Prospero's downfall. Alonso cautions Ferdinand against advisers and possible complacency, for any prince walks a tightrope between both. Auden's Alonso realizes that to become a victim of either advisers or complacency almost categorically leads to the downfall of the prince. Yet in The Tempest Prospero's trust in Antonio's advice "had indeed no limit" (I.ii.96). As a ruler, Prospero had turned his gaze away from civil duties and responsibilities "being transported/And rapt in secret studies" (I.ii.76-77). Prospero became a victim of Antonio's advice and his own complacent disregard for civil affairs; consequently, he lost Milan. While Antonio clearly sinned in usurping against Prospero, Prospero cannot remain blameless for his own downfall.

Prospero's certainty about his course of action on the island sometimes is as short-sighted as his understanding of his loss of Milan. Prospero often feels that he has the unqualified right to manipulate others. Nearly all of his magical interventions--from the tempest to the banquet masque and from Ferdinand's labors to Caliban's torments--are permeated by this attitude. In fact, Prospero's comments after the banquet masque in Act III are the clearest example of his sense of supreme authority. When Ariel returns from upbraiding the court party, Prospero remarks:

> Of my instruction has thou nothing bated
> In what thou had'st to say: so with good life
> And observations strange, my meaner ministers
> Their several kinds have done. My high charms work,
> And these mine enemies are all knit up
> In their distractions; they now are in my power.
> (III.iii.85-90)

At this point he believes that his magic controls the court party and permits him to return to Ferdinand and Miranda and present the fertility masque. Ariel's remarks to the court party were really the words of Prospero. Yet if Prospero has full control of the court party and the other characters, as he believes he has, then the importance of his manipulation of them may be seen in the light of the justice he renders them.

Hence, it is useful to determine the extent to which Prospero manipulates the sensory perceptions of individual characters. As his magical control over the court party diminishes in the fifth act, he remarks that

> they devour their reason and scarce think
> Their eyes do offices of truth, their words
> Are natural breath; but howso'er, [they] have
> Been justled from their senses.
> (V.i.155-158)

Prospero has created illusions that force Sebastian, Antonio, and Alonso to confront their own evil and realize their own nature, but he cannot force them to "see" in ways counter to their own nature. Sometimes Prospero's illusions are nearly farcical, as when he looses the hounds on Trinculo, Stephano, and Caliban. At other times his illusions are morally lofty, as when he presents the fertility masque to Ferdinand and Miranda. But the crucial illusion he creates concerns the attitudes of the court party before and after the banquet masque.

This masque is a consequence of the murder plot that Sebastian and Antonio devise, a plot that begins in Act II when Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo disagree radically about the nature of the island:

> Gon. Here is everything advantageous to life.
> Ant. True, save means to live.
> Seb. Of that, there's none, or little.
> Gon. How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!
> Ant. The ground, indeed, is tawny.
> Seb. With an eye of green in't.
>
> (II.i.48-53)

These reactions are subjective, and Shakespeare emphasizes that it is on the basis of their subjective and implicitly limited perceptions that Sebastian and Antonio plan to murder Alonso and Gonzalo. The remainder of the court party fall into a heavy slumber and Antonio's "strong imagination" fancies a crown on Sebastian's head if the occasion to murder Alonso and Gonzalo is seized. Sebastian wonders if he hears Antonio correctly:

> It is a sleepy language and thou speak'st
> Out of thy sleep. What is it thou didst say?
> This is a strange repose, to be asleep
> With eyes wide open; standing, speaking, moving,
> And yet so fast asleep.
>
> (II.i.206-210)

Antonio's message clarifies, though, and he incites Sebastian's slothful nature by arguing that to murder Alonso and Gonzalo is

> to perform an act
> Whereof what's past is prologue; what to come,
> Is yours and my discharge.
> (II.i.347-349)

This short exchange exemplifies that how a character perceives on the island tends to be related to his essential nature. To Gonzalo, an essentially good man, the island is a place where the immediate needs of the court party can be met. Gonzalo detects more than the possibility of survival; he feels that life can be comfortable on the island. Antonio and Sebastian, as Machiavels, cannot see the bounty the island provides. Instead, they see the island in terms of their own political lust. In other words, Prospero cannot turn Gonzalo into a Machiavel any more than he can turn Sebastian and Antonio into penitent and obedient citizens. All three of these characters see the island only through the kind of vision they bring to it. While Prospero creates illusions that force individual characters to confront themselves, he cannot, like Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream, turn a Bottom into an ass.

The banquet masque highlights Prospero's ability to create illusions that force characters to confront themselves. Just after Alonso and Gonzalo express their weariness and Antonio and Sebastian finish a second discussion of their murder plans, "several strange shapes" enter, "bringing in a banquet." Alonso detects a "kind/Of excellent dumb discourse" (III.iii.38-39) in the masque and Gonzalo approves of this strange business:

> Faith, sir, you need not fear. When we were boys,
> Who would believe that there were mountaineers

> Dew-lapp'd like bulls, whose throats had hanging at 'em
> Wallets of flesh? or that there were such men
> Whose heads stood in their breasts? which now we find
> Each putter-put of five for one will bring us
> Good warrant of.
>
> (III.iii.45-51)

No sooner does the court party decide to eat than Ariel enters as a Harpy, causes the banquet to vanish, and declares:

> You are three men of sin, whom Destiny,--
> That hath to instrument this lower world
> And what is in't--the never-surfeited sea
> Hath caused to belch up you; and on this island,
> Where man doth not inhabit,--you 'mongst men
> Being most unfit to live. I have made you mad;
> And even with such-like valour men hang and drown
> Their proper selves . . .
>
> you three
> From Milan did supplant good Prospero:
> Expos'd unto the sea, which hath requit it,
> Him and his innocent child: for which foul deed
> The powers, delaying, not forgetting, have
> Incens'd the seas and shores, yea, all the creatures,
> Against your peace.
>
> (III.iii.53-59, 69-72)

The masque concerns the immoral nature of Sebastian, Antonio and Alonso. Destiny, Ariel says, has incensed the ocean to belch up these evil men, an action that is a consequence of their supplanting Prospero. These three are not allowed to eat because food supports life while they would destroy it. All three are guilty of placing Prospero and Miranda in a "rotten carcass of a butt" (I.ii.146) where both might have perished, and Sebastian and Antonio even now plot further possible murders.

Gonzalo remains in character; he is no less amazed now than he was after observing that the tempest left his garments as fresh as they were for Claribel's marriage. Gonzalo accepts the strange sights and improbable events on the island and can even respond imaginatively to his reactions, as his political commentary suggests. But most of the

time Gonzalo is willing to wait for explanations, or at least not to press too hard in an attempt to understand the complete nature of the island.

Sebastian and Antonio continue to dissimulate. Sebastian implies that the masque is the product of the devil and Antonio declares that he will fight the fiends though they be legion. Though the masque provides a moral message, these two do not understand it, although their combativeness may result from the only way they seem capable of coping with changing and supernatural situations--their faith in political force. But the masque profoundly troubles Alonso: "it did bass my trespass" (III.iii.90). Nonetheless, his penitence may be more the result of his sorrow for the apparent loss of his son than of his growing awareness of culpability in Antonio's treason.

Shakespeare parodies the motif of perception in Caliban's burlesque first encounter with Stephano and Trinculo. Caliban prostrates himself, suspecting that the thunder he hears promises further torment from Prospero. Trinculo first suspects that the prostrate Caliban is a dead fish, but closer examination reveals that he is

> Legg'd like a man! and his fins like arms! Warm o' my troth! I do now let loose my opinion, hold it no longer: this is no fish, but an islander that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt.
>
> (II.ii.34-37)

Stephano shortly undertakes a similar examination, observing that the double monster Caliban-Trinculo not only speaks but also drinks. In fact, its "lesser legs" seem to be Trinculo's:

> . . . if any be Trinculo's legs, these are they. Thou art a very Trinculo indeed! How cam'st thou to be the siege of this moon-calf? Can he vent Trinculos?
>
> (II.ii.105-108)

Caliban, too, is no less amazed:

> These be fine things, and if they be not sprites.
> That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor:
> I will kneel to him.
>
> (II.ii.117-119)

In this quickly-paced scene, Shakespeare links the befuddled mentality of the drunkards to a form of understanding that involves rational detachment. The drunkards catalogue Caliban's features and then compare them to the features of other creatures in order to categorize him. But the consequence of this examination is a drunken revelry and Caliban's acquisition of a new master:

> No more dams I'll make for fish!
> Nor fetch in firing
> At requiring;
> Nor scrape trenchering, nor wash dish!
> 'Ban, 'Ban Cacaliban
> Has a new master:--get a new man.
>
> (II.ii.180-185)

This scene ironically qualifies the connection between sensory experience and action undertaken as a result of understanding such experience. Through a myopic perception of what to them is the primitive nature of the island, as well as Caliban's drunken promises to be obedient, Stephano and Trinculo eventually begin their own murder plot. They desire a more influential position than they presently have, but, like Caliban's refusal to follow further orders from Prospero, their desire prompts no real improvement in their condition. All three must still provide themselves with food, fuel and shelter; wine does not nourish for long.

Another important aspect of the motif of perception concerns the four stories told by characters in the play. The first act contains three--Prospero's story to Miranda about her uncle's past evil, Pros-

pero's story reminding Ariel of his captivity in a pine tree, and Caliban's tale to Prospero about Prospero's and Miranda's early days spent on the island. In the first story Prospero justifies the revenge he will undertake by informing Miranda about Antonio's past wickedness, Gonzalo's aid, and the sea journey that brought Prospero and Miranda to the island. The second story concerns Prospero's reminder to Ariel of Sycroax's confinement of him in a cloven pine for refusal to perform her commands, as well as an implied threat that Prospero will treat Ariel in a similar way should Ariel be disobedient. The final story in the first act is Caliban's. He retells Prospero's arrival on the island and the ways in which he rewarded Prospero's and Miranda's kindness by providing them with food and shelter. Caliban ends his story by flaunting his attempt to rape Miranda: had he succeeded, the island would be populated with Calibans. The fourth story occurs in the second act when Gonzalo relates to the other courtiers the joyous festivity of Claribel's marriage, arguing that they fare as well on the island as they did in Tunis.

These stories provide information the audience needs to understand the action of the play, but within the play they represent attempts by one character to influence another character's perceptions. These attempts do not completely succeed. Prospero correctly assesses the evil in Sebastian, Antonio and Alonso and Miranda accepts his judgment of them, but the first time that she sees them she calls them "goodly creatures" (V.i.182). Prospero tries to control Ariel by retelling Ariel's past, but the airy spirit remains restive, though obedient. Caliban tries to convince Prospero that Caliban himself is the true lord of the

island, but Prospero does not believe his slave. Gonzalo tries to cheer the court party, but Sebastian and Antonio mock him and Alonso rebukes him. Though all these stories are truthful to the storyteller, they do not influence the listeners in the way the storyteller hopes. Because accurate stories of past events do not successfully alter the perceptions of Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, and Miranda, Shakespeare may be suggesting that Prospero's creation of illusions in the present may not succeed any better.

While Antonio, Sebastian, Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban inadequately perceive their condition, Shakespeare hints, through Ferdinand and Miranda, at the dimensions of correct perception. Ferdinand receives the full force of Prospero's magic. After swimming ashore, Ferdinand hears Ariel's strange music and declares:

> This music crept by me upon the waters,
> Allaying both their fury and my passion
> With its sweet air: thence I have follow'd it,
> Or it hath drawn me rather.
>
> (I.ii.394-397)

Following after the music, he comes upon Miranda, and at first sight their eye-beams intertwine as tightly as do the eye-beams of Donne's lovers in "The Exstasie." Prospero cautions Miranda that Ferdinand is but a Caliban compared to other men, but she replies, "I have no ambition/To see a goodlier man" (I.i.495-496). Prospero's magic brings Ferdinand under Miranda's influence and he forgets his sorrow:

> My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.
> My father's loss, the weakness of which I feel,
> The wrack of all my friends, nor this man's threats,
> To whom I am subdued, are but light to me,
> Behold this maid: all corners else o' th' earth
> Let liberty make use of; space enough
> Have I in such a prison.
>
> (I.ii.489-496)

Prospero is content to bring the lovers together and to allow events to take their own course. The lovers are not children, nor are they simply deluded by Prospero. Ferdinand is an experienced courtier gifted in courtship, courtly language, and valor, and Miranda possesses a sharp mind. She has attempted to teach Caliban speech and soundly chastises him for his attempted rape. These lovers are types reflecting the amorous dimension of a romance, a form that does not insist on verisimilitude.

Because perception includes not only sensory awareness but also understanding that leads to action, the lovers represent a unification of these qualities. They see, understand, act and react almost instantly. There is an uncanny directness, simplicity, and correctness to their love. They need little else than the love they experience for each other, so little in fact, that after IV.i they all but disappear from the action. Their intuitive experience allows them to exist outside the misjudged and misjudging world of the play. Love is a totality they do not question, for they have no desire to escape or alter the conditions of their existence. Like Auden's lovers, Shakespeare's Ferdinand and Miranda are a unity: they love, and that is all that they should do, that is all that they need to do.

Prospero's magic in relation to the lovers receives full expression in the fertility masque. Prospero demands that Ferdinand remove a thousand logs and pile them up to prove his worthiness. His labors upset Miranda, who dismisses "bashful cunning" to propose to him. As a consequence, Prospero lifts the injunction against Ferdinand, but first extracts Ferdinand's promise not to violate Miranda's chastity until after they celebrate their nuptials.

Prospero rewards the lovers, appropriately, with a masque whose central figures are Iris, Juno, and Ceres. Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, is the messenger of the gods; Juno, the goddess of marriage; Ceres, the goddess of fruition. Iris calls upon Ceres to appear:

> A contract of true love to celebrate;
> And some donation freely to estate
> On the blest lovers.
>
> (IV.i.84-86)

Ceres desires to know if Venus and Cupid are present, deities whose presence would be scandalous not only because they helped Dis to abduct Ceres' daughter Prosperpine, but also because they would seek to trick Miranda and Ferdinand into a violation of chastity. Ceres need not worry, declares Iris, for the scandalous couple have flown to Paphos. The situation now set for a blessing, Juno and Ceres sing:

> Juno. Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,
> Long continuance and increasing,
> Hourly joys be still upon you!
> Juno sings her blessing on you!
> Ceres. Earth's increase, foison plenty,
> Barns and garners never empty
> Vines with clust'ring bunches growing;
> Plants with goodly burthen bowing;
> Spring come to you at the farthest
> In the very end of harvest!
> Scarcity and want shall shun you!
> Ceres's blessing so is on you.
>
> (IV.i.106-117)

The masque, as Ferdinand says, is a "most majestic vision" and demonstrates the grave power of Prospero's magic. Over against the Machiavellian attitudes of the court party, Shakespeare sets the notion of mutual and sincere love culminating in fruitful issue. At every stage in the motif of perception, the lovers have responded correctly. There is little that Prospero can teach them, for they neither commit nor entertain immoral actions.

Unlike the vision of the banquet masque, a vision designed to teach malefactors the nature of their evil, the fertility masque can teach the lovers nothing. It can suggest only what they already know: violation of chastity leads to blighted issue; acceptance of chastity leads to fruition. Rather than actively attempting to alter the ways they see, Prospero here joins the lovers in a celebration of a just and moral attitude. His attitude toward the lovers, then, is the polar opposite of his attitude toward the court party and suggests that Prospero is capable of seeking more than revenge.

II

The completion of Prospero's revenge can now be examined. Shortly before the court party awakens from Prospero's spell in the fifth act, he catalogues their natures:

> Holy Gonzalo, honourable man,
> Mine eyes, ev'n sociable to the show of thine,
> Fall fellowly drops . . .
> O good Gonzalo,
> My true preserver, and a loyal sir
> To him that follow'st! I will pay thy graces
> Home both in word and deed. Most cruelly
> Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter:
> Thy brother was a furtherer in the act.
> Thou art pinch'd for't now, Sebastian. Flesh and blood
> You, brother mine, that entertain'd ambition,
> Expell'd remorse and nature; whom, with Sebastian,--
> Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong,--
> Would have kill'd your king.
> (V.i.62-64, 68-78)

Gonzalo's goodness will be rewarded; Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio, Prospero hopes, will suffer inwardly for their evil. Prospero seems certain about their evil and at least Alonso openly repents: "Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat/Thou pardon me my wrongs" (V.i.118-119). Sebastian and Antonio do not openly repent, but Prospero forgives both.

There is no particular reason to believe that either Sebastian or Antonio is truly penitent, although Auden sheds light here. Auden's Antonio is totally beyond penitence; he is as self-interested in the end as he always was. But Auden allows Sebastian to realize the folly of his evil. Auden explores the dynamics of the Antonio-Sebastian relationship in an attempt to understand their silence. Antonio had secured Sebastian's assent to murder Alonso and Gonzalo by working on Sebastian's fancy. Sebastian, at least so Auden suggests, realizes the limits of his illusion but still remains wicked. If Auden is correct, and Sebastian's and Antonio's silence about their guilt seems to indicate that he is, then Prospero's attempt to educate or to introduce them to the ways of virtuous action has failed.

Caliban is an interesting parallel to Sebastian and Antonio. Prospero tells Ariel to release Caliban and his cohorts, and Caliban stumbles in, declaring, when he sees all these new faces:

> O Setebos, these be brave spirits indeed!
> How fine my Master is! I am afraid
> He will chastize me.
>
> (V.i.261-263)

He thinks that the court party are tormenting spirits sent by Prospero and tries to flatter his master in order to avoid pain. But Prospero does not torment Caliban and actually promises to forgive him. Caliban, in turn, promises that he will "be wise hereafter,/And seek for grace" (V.i.294-295). Caliban may be sincere, having realized the dubious quality of Stephano and Trinculo and he may be able to respond to Christian forgiveness. But by invoking Setebos and not the Christian God, he seems to imply that his promise to seek grace is more a desire to avoid pain than a realization of his sins. This ambivalence implies

that Caliban, like Sebastian and Antonio, wants to avoid Prospero's wrath, and is only placating Prospero. Caliban may be serious in his promise to seek grace, but Shakespeare leaves the question open.

Prospero forgives nonetheless. He does not demand that anyone express penitence or even that Alonso return Prospero's dukedom. Prospero even assures everyone that it is unnecessary to consider right now what has happened. "Do not," he tells Alonso,

> infest your mind with beating on
> The strangeness of this business; at pick'd leisure
> Which shall shortly be single, I'll resolve you,
> Which to you shall seem probable, of every
> These happen'd accidents: till when, be cheerful,
> And think of each thing well.
>
> (V.i.246-251)

Prospero asks the court party to calm their minds just as he had earlier done for himself. The master magician informs the characters that their experiences are no immediate cause for alarm or further consideration.

The outcome of Prospero's revenge is that three of the four malefactors seem to continue as they have all along. Certainly Prospero regains his dukedom, but the illusions he created to confront evildoers with their sins do not work on all of them. As the play ends, there is no certainty that Sebastian and Antonio will not attempt further coups d'etat or that Caliban understands grace. But Prospero forgives, realizing that revenge is inferior to mercy. To determine the origins of his forgiving attitude requires an examination of his growing awareness of the limitations to his magical interventions. These limitations involve Caliban and Ariel as well as Prospero's acceptance of his relationship to both.

III

To Kermode, Caliban represents the natural man. He is "accurately described" as a "salvage and deformed slave" who is a "measure of the incredible superiority of the world of Art, but also a measure of its corruption."[35] Kermode correctly sees that Caliban is a bestial man and that one of the tensions in the play is his relationship to Prospero. But by defining Caliban as the epitome of earthly nature to be cultivated by art, Kermode ignores Caliban's poetic nature as well as his nascent religious sensibility. Caliban is more accurately a representative of one plane of earthly existence against which some of Prospero's limitations may be measured.

One critical task, then, is to determine whether Prospero's tormenting of Caliban is fair. When Prospero arrived at the island, Caliban greeted him warmly and introduced him to "all the qualities o' th' isle" (I.ii.339). Prospero replied with affection and taught Caliban to name the sun and the moon, but Caliban's attempt to rape Miranda secured Prospero's fury.

Some comparisons with Browning's Caliban clarify the complicated nature of Caliban in The Tempest. Browning's Caliban generates his poetry out of his remarkable ability to analogize his physical world with that of Setebos. While Browning's Caliban is earthy, he is not unintelligent. Browning's Caliban understands his world through sensuous association with it, just as Shakespeare's Caliban does. "Be not afeard," Shakespeare's Caliban tells Stephano:

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[35]Introduction to the Arden edition of The Tempest, p. xlii.

> the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
> That, if I then wak'd after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
> The clouds methought would open, and show riches
> Ready to drop on me; that, when I wak'd,
> I cried to dream again.
>
> (III.iii.133-141)

Caliban's dreams have a sensuous richness; he is alive to natural beauty and not at all unpoetic.

Like Browning's, Shakespeare's Caliban experiences torment as a constant dimension to his existence. But Browning's Caliban assumes there are ways around Setebos; the experience of pain, though fearful, is not sufficient to keep the tormented Caliban constantly in check. Perhaps Shakespeare's Caliban deserves punishment for trying to rape Miranda, but his nature almost demands that he attempt coitus with her. As far as Browning's Caliban sees, sexual drive is a natural urge and is the one capacity that Setebos does not possess.

But the half-animal figure also articulates knotty observations about his god, Setebos. Browning's figure, although earthy, even penetrates beyond Setebos to an intuitive awareness of the Quiet, a deity that resembles the Christian God of Love. Shakespeare's Caliban possesses his own religious urges, too, although they reflect more often his worshipful approach to island visitors than any real awareness of a god. In the play, Caliban first responds to Prospero worshipfully, and he first sees Stephano as a "brave god."

Shakespeare is careful, however, not to give Caliban any awareness of a deity beyond Setebos; Shakespeare's Caliban is more concerned with his pain than with Setebos. Yet there seems no reason to exclude the

possibility that Shakespeare's Caliban possesses some potential for religious or ethical understanding. In fact, Browning's poem must move out of his feeling that Shakespeare's figure deserves religious analysis. And although Auden's reading of The Tempest amplifies Caliban's intelligence, he gives his Caliban some important religious insights.

There is, then, some question about Prospero's allegation that Caliban lacks any nurturable nature. There is more to Caliban than Prospero realizes; Prospero's heavy-handed control of Caliban seems more a consequence of his concern for his daughter's chastity--admittedly a concern not to be taken lightly--than a reflection of Caliban's continuing inability to learn.

Shakespeare inserts a counter commentary on the natural man through Gonzalo's idealistic political theory. "Had I plantation of this isle, my lord," he informs Alonso,

> I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
> No occupation; all men idle, all;
> And women, too, but innocent and pure:
> No sovereignty . . .
> All things in common Nature should produce
> Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
> Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
> Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,
> To feed my innocent people.
>
> (II.i.139-152, 155-160)

Gonzalo's "rule by contraries" eliminates learning, wealth, commerce, "occupation," war, and internal disputes and would rely instead on nature's bounty to provide for an innocent citizenry. Gonzalo's sentiments reflect his perception of the nature of the island; thus, he

tries to understand political authority in terms of the inherent conditions of his "kingdom" as he sees them.

Gonzalo would rule his "kingdom" differently than Prospero rules the island. Gonzalo's imagined government assumes that the primitive island resembles the society of the Golden Age, so that political authority, as Prospero understands it, is unnecessary. Yet both Prospero and Gonzalo begin with essentially the same perceptions of the island. The only difference between them, at least in terms of political authority, is that Gonzalo has not seen Caliban, currently the island's only indigenous inhabitant. Because he perceives the island as he does, Gonzalo may be either completely deceived by his perceptions or he may be intuiting the potential innocence in the native condition of the island's possible inhabitants.

Gonzalo understands the island, then, not only through its natural fruitfulness, but also through the nature of its possible inhabitants. Of course, Gonzalo guesses about the island society, but he comes to a different view of the island's inhabitants than does Prospero. Gonzalo's theory is not totally foolish, and Auden cannot fairly allow his Gonzalo to feel incompetent. Gonzalo is not a penetrating thinker, but he manages to articulate a vision of the Golden Age that suggests that Prospero does not understand all that he might about his slave.

By the play's end, Prospero may be beginning to realize that he has not understood Caliban. Prospero remarks to Alonso that Caliban, "this thing of darkness I/Acknowledge mine" (V.i.275-276). Prospero is apologizing to the Neopolitan court for his servant. After all, Prospero's comment comes just after Alonso recognizes his servants,

Stephano and Trinculo. Yet Prospero will shortly promise to pardon Caliban, and that promise marks a sharp departure from Prospero's consistent disgust with Caliban. This is not to say that Prospero has any complete awareness of Caliban, only that he may have a momentary glimpse into Caliban's nature.

Another, perhaps more sound, meaning for Prospero's acknowledgement of Caliban is that Shakespeare is hinting at the similarities between Caliban and Prospero. Auden helps to locate this issue. Auden's Prospero realizes, although too late, that he has failed to understand Caliban and his relationship to him. Pointing to Caliban, Auden's Prospero remarks to Ariel, "you found on me a wish/For absolute devotion; result--his wreck." Auden's Prospero realizes that he has relied on imagination too heavily in an attempt to order experience; consequently, he remains incapable of assisting Caliban and will go to his grave incompetent. In The Tempest, Prospero demands authority and expects attentiveness to what he intends to accomplish. Caliban must fulfill Prospero's desires; failure to do so constitutes near rebellion. A stubborn sense of authority and its eventual loss seem to be the drive behind Auden's Prospero. Thus, in Auden's view, if Prospero loses his authority, then Caliban must crumble, for Caliban's whole essence reflects the action of Prospero's authority. But in Shakespeare's play, Prospero clearly changes; he does not remain a stubborn old man, nor does he succumb to the despair that Auden would like to see. Auden's analysis of Prospero's relationship to Caliban is useful mainly because it suggests that their fates are interrelated.

Both Prospero and Caliban possess similar motives. Both are deposed

rulers. Both seek to regain their kingdoms. Both try to punish those they consider evil. The similarities are striking, and although Caliban seeks to rape and murder, his attitude is in keeping with the conditions of savage life. In fact, Browning's poem suggests that savage life is brutal and must be met accordingly. Of course, Caliban's plot is as evil as the plot by Sebastian and Antonio to murder Alonso and Gonzalo. But what makes Caliban's attitude unique is that his plot arises out of the same vengeful matrix as Prospero's. If Caliban is correct in declaring that he is the true king of the island, then he should regain his kingdom; Caliban's logic sounds like Prospero's.

Caliban's vindictiveness, then, is the "dark" side of Prospero. And that Caliban chooses to murder is a possibility inherent in Prospero. Of course, Prospero never actualizes the possibility, but the force that prompts him to torment those under his magical spells may represent a modification of this "dark" urge.

One final aspect of the Prospero-Caliban relationship should be noted. As the natural man, Caliban is Prospero's closest contact with the elements of earth and water. Prospero, in turn, attempts to control these elements and part of his magic depends upon how successfully he does so. But if Prospero's control of Caliban is short-sighted and vengeful, then his ability to control those elements Caliban represents may be limited. In other words, although Prospero produces some spectacular illusions, and his control of these elements may be great, his control may reflect a kind of blindness to the morality of forgiveness. Prospero must give over his control of Caliban as that control is a barrier to an understanding of mercy. Prospero must liberate Caliban

to liberate himself. Thus, Caliban can turn back to the state of savage freedom and avoid the sin of murder, while Prospero can rise to a higher state of moral rectitude and avoid the sin of vengeance.

The relationship between Prospero and Ariel complements the relationship between Prospero and Caliban. Ariel represents the elements air and fire, although he seems "at ease in all the elements."[36] As the attendant spirit that amazes the ship's crew, Ariel appears as the wild elements of a storm--thunder, lightning, even St. Elmo's fire. When forced, he is an obedient servant who places "all his quality" (I.ii.193) at his master's disposal. But Ariel grows impatient under Prospero's commands:

> Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains,
> Let me remember thee what thou hast promised,
> Which is not yet performed me.
> (I.i.242-244)

Ariel demands liberty; Prospero promises torment unless Ariel obeys. Ariel's earlier confinement in a "cloven pine," a consequence of his refusal to obey Sycorax's "earthy and abhorr'd commands" (I.ii.273), becomes the bludgeon Prospero wields to control his airy servant.

Ariel makes Prospero aware in the final act of the inner torments the court party suffers and turns Prospero away from vengeance to mercy. Ariel informs Prospero:

> The King,
> His brother, and yours, abide all three distracted
> And the remainder mourning over them,

---

[36]Appendix B, "Ariel as Daemon and Fairy," Arden edition of The Tempest, p. 142. Kermode sees Ariel largely in terms of a demon, or fallen angel, and a kind of Anglo-Ovidian hybrid fairy. Kermode rightly sees Ariel as "an imaginative apprehension of the pity [Prospero] would feel were he human," but it is possible, I think, to extend this insight further than Kermode does.

> Brimful of sorrow and dismay; but chiefly
> Him you term'd, sir, "The good old lord Gonzalo";
> His tears runs down his beard, like winter's drops
> From eaves of reeds. Your charm so strongly works 'em,
> That if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender.
>
> (V.i.11-19)

The conversation continues:

> Pros. Dost thous think so, spirit?
> Ari. Mine would, sir, were I human.
> Pros. And mine shall.
> Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
> Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
> One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
> Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than you art?
> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick,
> Yet my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part; the rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further.
>
> (V.i.19-32)

Ariel influences Prospero's imagination, turning Prospero's attention to the painful condition of the court party. Even though he is slightly incorrect in his belief that the court party is penitent, Prospero chooses to act virtuously. But to do so, he has to be receptive to Ariel's plea for mercy. That receptiveness grows after the fertility masque when Prospero begins to realize something about the extra-human quality of existence which Ariel, in one way, embodies. Remembering the plot of the "beast Caliban and his confederates," Prospero dismisses the spirits of the masque, reassures the lovers, and then begins his gravest speech:

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air:
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,

> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd;
> Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled:
> Be not disturbed by my infirmity:
> If you be pleas'd, retire into my cell,
> And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,
> To still my beating mind.
>
> (IV.i.148-163)

In one way, Prospero's comments are a poetic dismissal of the masque. The stage words "revels," "actors," and "pageant" emphasize this interpretation. The spirits have departed; it was all a pleasant show meant, perhaps, not to be taken seriously. Clifford Lyons writes:

> In all of Shakespeare's dramatic scripts, stage imagery has important implications of meaning and delight for the reader as well as for the hearer-observer-participant in the theater; for it is a functional part of the total "image" which is the play.[37]

Nonetheless, it is unwise to infer that Shakespeare is commenting on drama in the way he does, for example, in Hamlet. The poetry here is not another "mirror held up to nature."

Underneath these lines is an elusive and ambiguous exploration of the ephemeral quality of existence. Through the movement of the lines, the spectral vision of the masque evaporates into thinner and thinner air and, with it, the very basis of existence itself. Prospero realizes that not only were the actors spirits who "are melted into air," but also that like the "baseless fabric of this vision," man's great monuments, the world itself, even those who inhabit it, "shall dissolve" and "leave not a rack behind." Prospero's lines could scarcely have

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[37]Clifford Lyons, "Stage Imagery in Shakespeare's Plays," in Essays on Shakespearian and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia, Missouri, 1962), p. 274.

been beaten to a more airy thinness. They do not present a logical argument so much as a hazy web of half-perceived statements about existence. As he realizes the baselessness of the masque his art creates, Prospero's "beating mind" shifts back and forth in space and time.

In one way, Prospero understands that existence is mutable. Existential things change, dissolve, and finally nothing earthly remains. But existential things are more than mutable; they have only a hazy basis in existence. Their elemental foundations are uncertain. If the vision Prospero creates has an uncertain basis, then so does man himself. If "we are such stuff/As dreams are made on," then men's lives have the fragmented quality of dreams.

Dreams are ambiguous and ambivalent. They are partly real and partly unreal. A dream is a real mental occurrence that can suggest truths about existential reality. But a dream is also an unreal event because the narrative content of dreams usually does not occur as historical or objective fact, although it may partake of historical reality. Dreams are also unreal because they cannot be experienced by the normal operations of the senses, although the experience of a dream may seem sensually real. Dreams are illusions that tell suppressed truths, usually in a disguised way, if Freud's definition of a dream is correct.

Even so, dreams are dreamed; if human existence seems dream-like, then someone or something must dream us. These dreams may be charming or horrifying, but they exist only as long as a person sleeps. Thus, existence is partly conscious, partly unconscious. Men fully understand dreams only after prolonged conscious reflection, but the dream itself is an unconscious experience. The quality of men's lives, finally, is

removed from complete waking understanding. Men must accept the mutable nature and the unconscious aspects of existential reality along with the permanent and conscious aspects.

Prospero's imagination moves from the vision that is the product of his art to an intuitive understanding of experience itself. For a magician whose art comprises, in one way, the full extent of the mind's conscious powers, Prospero's new-found knowledge is the beginning of a profound reevaluation of his actions. Consequently, when Ariel informs him of the sorrowful state of the court party, Prospero is willing to listen. That willingness comes partly out of Prospero's rising awareness that his magical illusions do not satisfactorily confront existential reality, and partly out of his awareness of what Ariel represents to him.

In fact, Auden's most impressive insights in "The Sea and the Mirror" center precisely on Prospero's relationship to Ariel. Auden detects the dilemma in the Ariel-Prospero relationship. Auden calls Ariel the "invisible spirit of imagination," but imagination is a human characteristic. Thus, Ariel embodies the human characteristic, in its broadest terms, that plays with the possibilities inherent in experience. In Auden's poem, Ariel can realize that he is "hopelessly in love with . . . drab mortality." But Auden implies that to allow the imagination freely to consider all the possibilities open to a man violates the nature of imagination, for imagination should enable a man to realize his own potential and not wander away from it. Indeed, Auden's Caliban suggests that to follow solely imagination in the journey of experience leads only to emotional poverty. Auden suspects that Prospero does not

respond to his imagination as he should; consequently, Auden's Prospero asks Ariel:

> Are all your tricks a test? If so, I hope you find, next time,
> Someone in whom you cannot spot the weakness
> Through which you will corrupt him with your charm.
> (CLP, p. 206)

Here Auden explores the dynamics of the imagination in relation to existential reality. Because imagination is not a tool for controlling experience, Auden sees in Prospero's attempt to give substance to Ariel --to use the imagination to control existential reality--a great error.

Auden by and large correctly assesses Shakespeare's Prospero. Whatever Ariel is in The Tempest, he operates most often as the embodiment of Prospero's attempts to control other characters. Ariel assumes the various shapes Prospero commands; the ethereal becomes the seemingly substantial. But the problems in Prospero's commands surface in his commentary after the fertility masque. If reality is "insubstantial," or a kind of hazy dream, then to force Ariel, who is really a spirit, to assume seemingly substantial shape is unjustifiable. Commanding Ariel to take on seeming substance confuses the conscious and unconscious aspects of existence.

Prospero's realizations about the hazy basis of every-day reality leads to an increased awareness of his failure to comprehend the nature of Ariel. Ariel stands out, finally, not as Prospero's imagination, but as a spirit implicitly suggesting the dream-like aspects of existence. It is as grave a mistake to demand that Ariel take on seeming substance as it is to assume that the reality of men's lives is completely conscious. In realizing what he finally does about experience, Prospero must shift from vengeance, an attempt to organize experience -

around retribution, to forgiveness, an attempt not to organize experience but to understand charity.

Perhaps justifiably, though, he considers once more the grand accomplishments of his magic. He has dimmed the sun, created storms, caused the mountains to shake, even made the dead walk again,

> but this rough magic
> I here abjure; and, when I have required
> Some heavenly music, which even now I do,--
> To work mine end upon their senses, that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fadoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book.
>
> (V.i.50-57)

Prospero's experiences push him toward abjuring his magic. His art, the one accomplishment that has sustained his island solitude and now insures the restoration of his dukedom, must be discarded. Prospero forgives his enemies because forgiveness is the only wise action to undertake.

In the epilogue, Prospero condenses his new ethical awareness:

> Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
> And what strength I have's mine own,
> Which is most faint; now 'tis true,
> I must be here confined by you,
> Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
> Since I have my dukedom got,
> And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell,
> In this bare island by your spell;
> But release me from my bands
> With the help of your good hands:
> Gentle breath of yours my sails
> Must fill, or else my project fails,
> Which was to please. Now I want
> Spirits to enforce, Art to enchant;
> And my ending is despair,
> Unless I be relieved by prayer,
> Which pierces so, that it assaults
> Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
> As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
> Let your indulgence set me free.

While Prospero developed his insights into mutability by the use of stage imagery, here he uses comments about his magic as he reiterates for the audience the theme of Christian mercy. He declares that his "charms are all o'erthrown" and that his personal strength is now "most faint." He realizes the limits of his magic as well as the limits of his own strength. He is, after all, returning to Milan where "every third thought shall be my grave" (V.i.311). But Shakespeare may be using "faint" ironically. "Faint" suggests weakness, and, possibly, visual haziness. Shakespeare may be suggesting that Prospero's faltering strength is not only the consequence of old age but also is one of the elusive conditions of existence.

Prospero continues by reminding the audience that they may either imaginatively confine him to the island or send him to Naples. He suggests that his confinement is a "spell" the audience places on him, for their imaginations are something like the magician's art. Until the imagination releases him, Prospero faces eternal imaginative confinement to the island.

Prospero further suggests that applause is the release he seeks. The "gentle breath" of praise will fill his sails and send him homeward. Otherwise, says Prospero, "my project fails/Which was to please." To send him homeward the audience must employ their imagination and express delight.

The next four lines sound like a short summary of Prospero's plea. His spirits vanished and his art gone, he faces despair that can only be relieved by prayer. But prayer suggests a shift in the argument. Prospero insists up to this point that the audience applaud and use

their imaginations to send him to Naples. Hands brought together in applause now are hands brought together in prayer. Only a direct approach to God will release him now, for prayer addresses the Force that transcends men's limits. Prayer approaches God, the Being beyond the elusive and illusory world. To address Him is to assault "mercy itself, and frees all faults." In prayer, men arrive at a position that carries them beyond their limited and limiting experience.

To ensure that the message is understood, Prospero declares:

> As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
> Let your indulgence set me free.

The statement echoes the Lord's Prayer:

> And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
> And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Most men, says Prospero, realize their sins and seek to be pardoned for them. No less a desire informs his wish to return to Milan. Man's desire to free himself of sin, a desire, implicitly, to enter the Heavenly Kingdom, rests on the awareness that prayer can be a release for man.

Just as Auden's Caliban realizes that the "Wholly Other Life" provides the only positive comfort when the inherently limiting conditions of existence become intolerable, so Prospero moves to a positive statement about Christian mercy. Shakespeare's Prospero does not, like Auden's, take the "silent passage/Into discomfort." Just as Auden argues that rigidly to organize human experience leads to self-defeat, so Shakespeare suggests that the dimensions of human experience are too broad for mere man to order or comprehend completely. In the context of what Caliban and Ariel represent, Prospero's initial desire to

accomplish his revenge without fully considering their nature and his relationship to them was bound to fail. Shakespeare suggests that life is something like a dream and that the fabrications of human consciousness, which Prospero's art epitomizes, pale when they confront the shifting patterns of existence. Mercy alone enables man to move toward the Reality that rests beyond his illusory experiences.

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